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***The Contribution of Soft Systems Methodology  
to the Achievement of Change  
in Organisational Culture***

by  
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## SUMMARY

This PhD was motivated by the perceived need to assist organisations to be more successful in achieving change in organisational culture. Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) was chosen as the framework for the study because of the researcher's ten years' experience with the approach, and the wealth of literature suggesting its appropriateness for organisational change projects (eg Checkland 1981, Checkland & Scholes 1990). The aim was to achieve a deeper understanding of *how* SSM can assist cultural change and what other factors are important. Both literature and practice indicate that the participants' views of what happens in an SSM project are vital, since they will be charged with implementing the change, and yet this viewpoint was not represented in the literature of SSM. This research presents the participant perspective.

Action research was chosen and two in-depth case studies were carried out. Interviews with other experienced SSM researchers/consultants augmented the data gathered via the case studies.

The major contribution of the research was to extend the theory of SSM and organisational culture by:

- The conclusion that SSM can contribute to cultural change in organisations, where cultural change is understood to involve a change in roles, norms or values relating to the primary purpose of the organisation (ie in SSM terms - a change in Weltanschauungen). This view was validated by the sponsor and participants of the case studies, and tested in real business consultancy projects.
- The identification and ranking of what factors had contributed to this changed Weltanschauungen, from the perspective of the sponsor and participants.

Considerations impacting on the general applicability of the research findings were identified and explored, ie an organisation's degree of receptiveness to cultural change, the role of the facilitator, and the way SSM is applied.

In addition the research:

- Tested the use of a mix of Mode 1 and 2\* of SSM.
- Highlighted that SSM project facilitators and clients tend to select each other based on trust and shared values. This can lead to the SSM project reinforcing the client's values.
- Tested an inter-linked group of techniques introduced by the researcher to strengthen the participative approach to using SSM.

While acknowledging the limitations of action research and surveys, as well as the researcher's bias, it is considered that in organisations which display a general receptiveness to cultural change, the approach used in the case studies, and the SSM learning described, should prove useful in assisting the process of cultural change.

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\* Mode 1: The stage by stage application of methodology. Mode 2: Internal mental use. (Checkland and Scholes 1990, p 281)

## **PREFACE**

### **MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH**

For a number of years Western Australian organisations - like others elsewhere in the world - have been grappling with the process of organisational change. Public sector organisations in particular have, for example, been amalgamated, restructured, “down-sized”, corporatised, decentralised, formed into business units, changed their roles, and have outsourced some of their functions. Driving the desire for change are such perceived needs as to be more client oriented, competitive, accountable, productive, or cost effective; to improve the overall quality of service; or to separate regulatory and revenue generating functions. In most cases such initiatives require changes in behaviour, attitudes and values to occur (ie cultural change) in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

Over the last ten years the majority of the researcher’s work as a consultant in strategic planning and information planning has involved assisting organisations with this type of change. The difficulties in achieving cultural change have been apparent (eg as discussed by Edwards 1988, Frank 1987, Wilkins & Ouchi 1983, Gitlow 1992). Many of the participants in the projects with which the researcher has been involved claim that low morale, confusion about strategic direction, mistrust between management and staff, poor communication within the organisation, and lower overall effectiveness are the unintended results of the ongoing process of organisational change.

The researcher believes these are critically important issues, not only from the perspective of organisational performance, but also from the viewpoint of the people who spend a major part of their life working in organisations and appear to be suffering from the process of organisational change rather than finding job satisfaction and personal fulfilment. Although this research is based in Western Australia, these issues, of course, are relevant elsewhere. Therefore, any learning which can assist towards more effective organisational change should have general applicability beyond

Western Australia so long as the cultural implications of different societies and organisations are recognised (Kelley 1986, Hofstede et al 1990).

Information systems projects have also been recognised as a key component in achieving organisational change (eg Galliers 1991a), including from the perspective of achieving increased productivity.

Organisational change and information system projects which involve shared understanding about “what we are trying to achieve” from a socio-technical perspective (eg Mumford 1983), would seem to be able to contribute to changes in attitudes and values. Researchers such as Checkland (eg 1981), Checkland & Scholes (1990), Wilson (1984, 1989), Galliers (eg 1988, 1992a), and Wood-Harper & Avison (1992) have suggested that Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) is a useful approach for such analysis. The researcher also believes that SSM can be a valuable framework within which to carry out organisational change and information planning projects, and this view is based on ten years’ experience in using SSM for consultancy projects. However, it is recognised that many factors other than the use of SSM also contribute to successful organisational change, for example, the organisation’s environment (structure and culture), leadership, and external pressures (eg Pettigrew et al 1992, Edwards 1988). Nonetheless, when using SSM for this type of work, it is important to try to identify if, and how, the use of SSM does contribute to the process of organisational change, while recognising the complexities of organisations as social systems. This is the focus of this research.

## **ABOUT THE RESEARCHER**

I was introduced to SSM at Curtin University (Perth, WA) in the early 1980s while studying with Galliers. In 1982, while working as a librarian at Woodside Offshore Petroleum, I became involved in the organisation’s introduction of SSM as the corporate methodology for information planning. The first SSM project for which I had overall responsibility occurred in 1984, when I was employed as Coordinator,

Information Systems Planning at the Health Department of WA. The aim of this project was to define information requirements for non teaching hospitals. I have used SSM as the basis of almost all my work since that time, first in further Health Department projects, then as a consultant and facilitator in information systems planning, corporate planning, and organisational review projects. (See Appendix 1 for an indication of the type of projects undertaken.) I have also lectured in SSM as part of the graduate programme in the School of Information Systems at Curtin University, including supervising students' SSM projects, and have delivered a number of SSM educational programmes for specific organisations.

As intended by Checkland, each use of SSM has caused the problem solving system to evolve, ie SSM is an approach which "continually learns and adapts in response to its interactions with a problem" (Atkinson & Checkland 1988, p 713). On reflection I began using SSM very tentatively in a mechanical, method-oriented way, struggling through the seven step process, despite Galliers' teaching of the true SSM ethos, as enunciated by Checkland. My confidence with SSM has grown continually over the last ten years, and I have adapted the approach based on the understanding which developed with each successive project. Now I invariably carry out all stages of the SSM process in workshops where I take the role of facilitator (Galliers et al 1994).

My ten years' experience in using SSM prior to undertaking this research has inevitably influenced the research themes\*, analysis of the literature, research methods, research contribution and style of presentation of the thesis. To assist the reader I have summarised below my perceptions of this influence:

- I was introduced to the literature of SSM as part of my post graduate studies. The focus of these studies was the use of SSM for information systems (IS) planning.
- I then began applying SSM for IS planning and encountered some resistance from project participants to the use of SSM terminology. Nomenclature such as root

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\* When interviewing Checkland in September 1993, as part of this research, he suggested the use of the concept "research theme" for SSM action research, rather than research question or hypothesis, and this advice has been followed.

definition, CATWOE, Weltanschauung, transformation process and conceptual model did not appear to be acceptable business language. By the mid 1980s I had stopped using these words when working with clients. In doing so I also found it was not essential to have a short introductory course in SSM for participants before commencing a project. This had seemed necessary to make the terminology less intimidating, and also because I believe that in Perth at that time myself and other SSM practitioners tended to be rather elitist in thinking that SSM was so intellectually challenging that an introductory course was necessary before anyone could take part in a project - even though participation was very limited in those days (as explained below). In contrast, I discovered that participants could be guided successfully through a project, using everyday language, and with no prior training.

- My early use of SSM caused me to be concerned that IS planning projects tended to run into difficulties if the organisation had no formal corporate plan (which was quite common in the Western Australian public sector in the 1980s). By questioning Weltanschauungen and developing conceptual models the IS planning projects tended to be shaping corporate direction. In some instances this was not always understood or appreciated by some members of the corporate executive, in other cases a gap in shared understanding was being created between the participants in the IS planning project and the rest of the organisation. Contributing to this may have been that as a “novice” SSM practitioner I was inexperienced in managing these situations. The outcome was that I sought opportunities to be involved in using SSM in corporate planning projects as a precursor to use of SSM in IS planning. In later years, as I moved into a private consultancy role it appeared that I was identified as having corporate planning skills, and was asked to assist with strategic planning initiatives, often with no follow-on IS planning.
- A further concern emerged from my early use of SSM. All SSM work in the early 1980s appeared to be conducted with minimum participation in the process by members of the organisation (eg Checkland 1981, Galliers et al 1981). Rather,



SSM “experts” did most of the thinking and modelling in the “back room” and then presented the results to a committee or working group for their consideration. I followed this tradition (LeFevre & Pattison, 1986). My concern was that most of the learning appeared to be experienced by the consultants rather than members of the organisation. Opportunities for increasing shared understanding within the organisation were missed. This seemed to increase the risk that the recommendations of the study would not be implemented. I sought for ways to gain more meaningful participation from project stakeholders (ie members of the organisation, their partners and clients) and, still using SSM to underpin my work, began experimenting with workshop techniques where I played the role of facilitator.

- During the mid-1980s an informal SSM group formed in Perth based around Galliers and ex Curtin SSM students. We tended to concur that SSM terminology need not be used in business projects and that SSM was most successful when used participatively.
- Using a participative approach to SSM projects I observed how participants increased their shared understanding and developed new organisational beliefs and directions. I realised that the essential nature of my work was facilitating changes in organisational culture.
- This research was therefore undertaken to enhance understanding of the use of SSM to achieve change in organisational culture. In embarking on the research I was inevitably biased by ten years’ experience as an SSM practitioner, having earned my living from the use of SSM, and intending to continue to do so. This bias, to some extent, shaped my choice of the literature which I considered was relevant to enhancing the use of SSM in organisational change/consultancy projects, as well as to advancing the theory of cultural change and SSM. It influenced the decision in the research design not to announce in advance my intention to use the case studies as PhD research so as not to change “normal”

business behaviour<sup>†</sup>. It also resulted in my focus on investigating whether the participants believed cultural change had occurred. This is important because the participants will be charged with implementing the outcomes of the SSM project and therefore their understanding and commitment are essential. Yet the participant viewpoint has not, to my knowledge, been reported in-depth in the SSM literature. In addition, I wanted to find out, from the participants' perspective, what had contributed to the cultural change, so that this could be fed back into further consultancy projects as well as further research. My practitioner bias also shaped the extent to which the thesis aims to provide guidelines for other users of SSM, so that a contribution is made to practice as well as theory. However, while acknowledging the practitioner bias, it is important to highlight that the research is in the tradition of SSM action research, as promoted by Checkland (eg 1981). It is also in keeping with the way Checkland established relationships between SSM researchers at Lancaster University and external consultants applying SSM, so that theory could contribute to practice and vice versa. Further, in seeking the views of the participants, rather than relying solely on the researcher's interpretation of events, this research attempts to overcome the researcher bias in explanation of outcomes which is characteristic of most of the SSM literature. In conclusion, I was aware of the practitioner bias in designing, conducting and analysing the research, and have tried to balance appropriately the dual role of consultant and researcher, realising that "doing action in action research demands experience and understanding of methods for consultancy and intervention" (Eden and Huxham, 1995, p 15).

In order to give context to the case studies which form part of this research, I have described in Appendix 2 my adaptation, understanding and way of using SSM. I have not included the additional stages of SSM when used in information planning projects as this is outside the scope of this research.

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<sup>†</sup> The ethical considerations relating to this decision are discussed in Chapter 3, Method of Investigation, Section 3.4.1.

Publications which have resulted from this research, and from the adaptation of SSM based on other consultancy projects, are provided in Appendix 3.

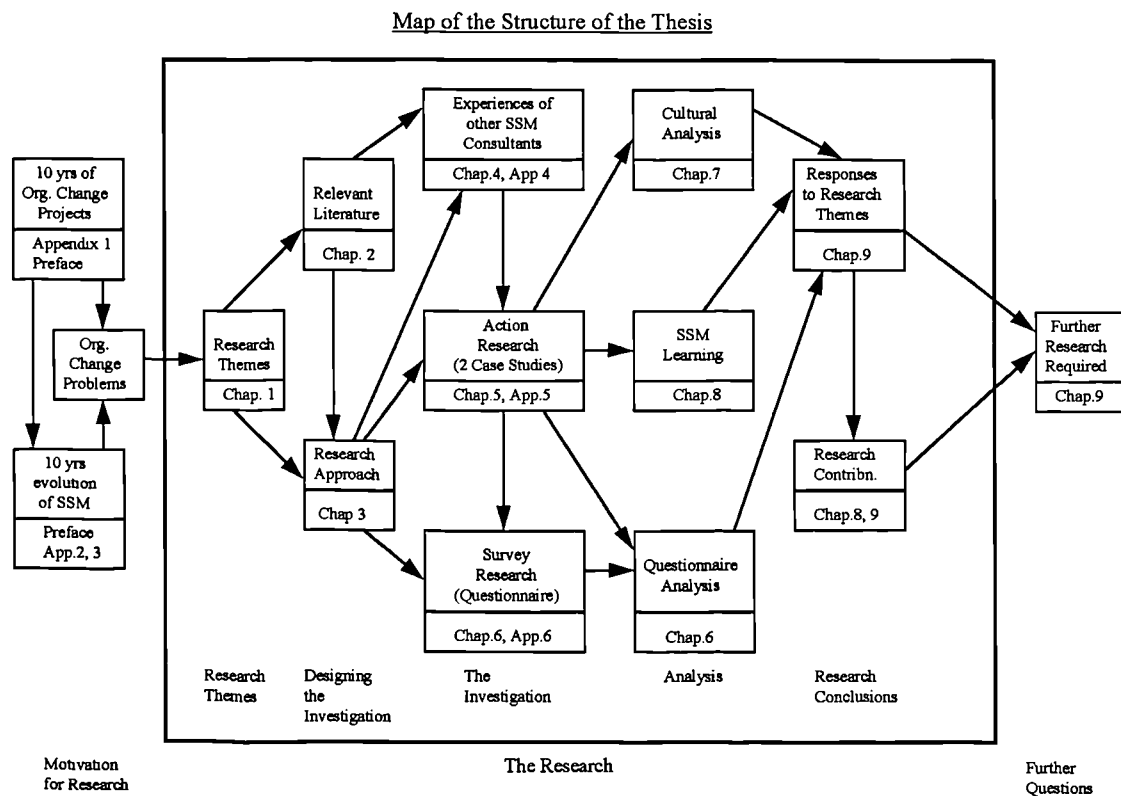
## **THESIS STRUCTURE**

The thesis structure, as shown on the following map, aims to guide the reader, showing how:

- The motivation for the research gave rise to the research themes.
- The research themes led to an analysis of relevant literature in order to achieve a deeper understanding of two key areas critical to the research themes:
  - the achievement of cultural change in organisations;
  - the theory and practice of SSM .
- This deeper understanding of the implications of the research themes enabled choices to be made about the most appropriate research approaches (with further input from literature relating to research methods and their strengths and weaknesses).
- Applying the chosen research approaches involved three phases of investigation:
  - structured interviews with other consultants to learn from their experiences in using SSM for organisational change projects;
  - action research using SSM for two major case studies in the Crown Law Department of WA;
  - a survey of perceptions of the case study participants.
- Analysis of the investigation is then carried out from the perspective of:
  - survey analysis;
  - cultural analysis;
  - SSM learning.

- This learning provided the basis for analysis related to the research themes, and for the research contribution to be evaluated, leading to the identification of further research topics.

Figure 1:



To assist the reader further an overview of each Chapter of the thesis is shown below:

## Chapter 1: Research Themes

This chapter identifies the research objective and underlying assumptions. The research themes and conditions of proof are specified, as well as the requirement to be able to generalise from the research findings.

## Chapter 2: Relevant Literature

Literature relevant to the research themes is analysed in this chapter, and comments provided to show how the literature impacted on the research. Two broad areas are covered - the literature of organisational culture, and the literature of SSM.

### **Chapter 3: Method of Investigation**

Alternative research approaches are reviewed and action research is chosen as the most appropriate way of investigating the research themes. Checkland's approach to action research is applied, ie that the intellectual framework in terms of which learning will be defined must be declared in advance.

### **Chapter 4: Interviews with SSM Consultants**

An overview of the interviews with SSM consultants in the UK is presented. Key issues relevant to this research are analysed, with particular focus on the factors which contribute to successful change in organisational culture, and the role of the facilitator. The interviews strengthen the research design and interpretation of results.

### **Chapter 5: The Case Studies**

Two case studies form the action research component of this thesis. Chapter 5 describes the case studies from the perspective of the process of changes in Weltanschauungen which occurred and key events contributing to that change.

### **Chapter 6: Analysis of Case Study Questionnaires**

This chapter analyses the questionnaires which were administered at the end of the case studies and identifies, from the participants' viewpoint, whether a change in Weltanschauungen occurred which could be interpreted as cultural change, and what factors in the SSM process contributed.

### **Chapter 7: Cultural Analysis of the Case Study Organisations**

The culture of the case study organisations is studied in greater depth as a basis for applying criteria to determine how receptive the organisations were to cultural change. The conclusions reached aim to assist the ability to generalise from this research.

### **Chapter 8: Systems Learning and Contribution**

The action research is analysed from a systems perspective (ie SSM: Mode 1, Mode 2, Cultural Stream and Logic Based Stream) to identify learning and contribution to the

testing and extension of theory. Analysis in this chapter also assists the ability to generalise from the research.

## **Chapter 9: Research Findings**

This chapter synthesises the rest of the thesis and presents the analysis of the research themes, the overall contribution of the research, and further research required.

## **APPENDICES**

### **Appendix 1: Consultancy Projects**

SSM projects undertaken by the researcher over a ten year period are listed in order to give context to this research.

### **Appendix 2: Adaptation of SSM**

The researcher's adaptation of SSM is outlined to explain the way SSM was applied in the action research.

### **Appendix 3: Publications**

A bibliography is provided of the researcher's publications emanating from ten years of use of SSM as well as from this research.

### **Appendix 4: Interviews with SSM Consultants**

This appendix links to Chapter 4 and provides the full text of interviews with SSM consultants in the UK.

### **Appendix 5: Case Studies**

This appendix links to Chapter 5 and documents in detail, from a personal perspective, the two case studies.

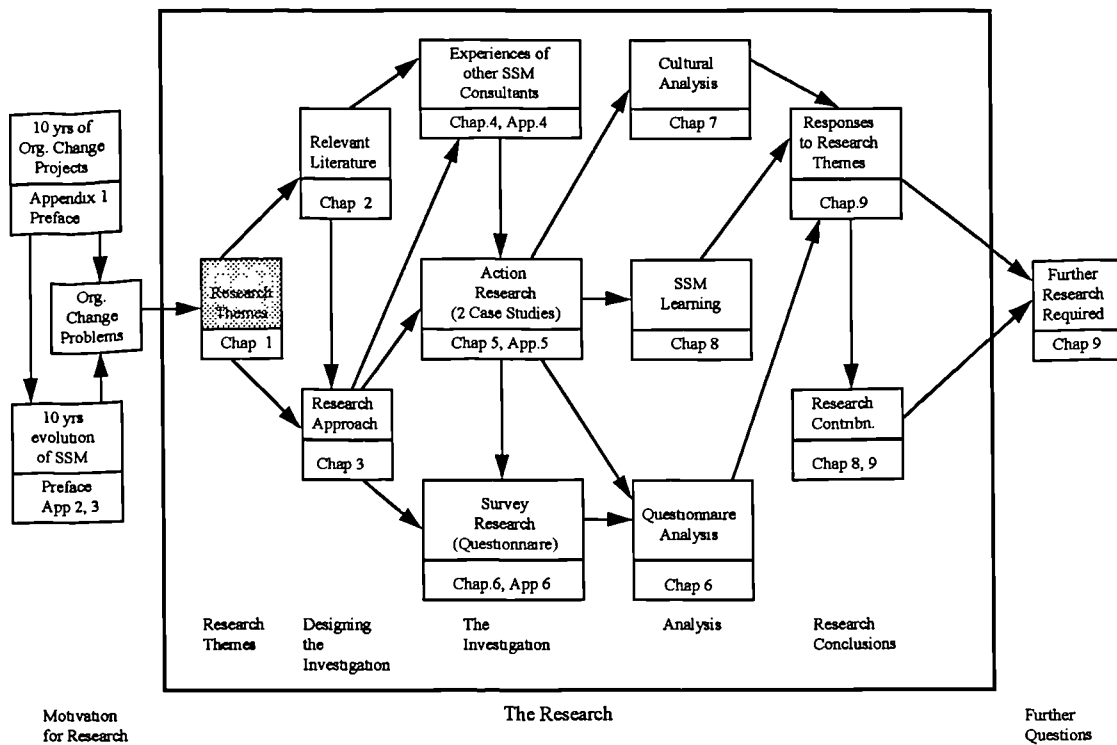
### **Appendix 6: Questionnaires**

This appendix links to Chapter 6 and provides the full answers to post-project questionnaires and associated analysis.

# CHAPTER 1

## RESEARCH THEMES

Map of the Structure of the Thesis



### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Preface explained that many organisations are searching for ways to achieve successfully organisational change, that this often requires a change in organisational culture, but that numerous difficulties are involved which impact on the success of the organisation and the job satisfaction/happiness of employees. Further, although Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) has been considered a useful approach for organisational/cultural change projects (eg Checkland & Scholes 1990), there is a need to understand more deeply whether SSM does contribute to such change, and if so how.

Based on this motivation, this chapter specifies the aim of the research, the underlying assumptions, the research themes, conditions of proof, and implications for generalising the outcomes of the research to achieve improved understanding of the use of SSM for organisational change projects.

## 1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Given the above motivation, the aim of the research is to:

- Evaluate Soft System Methodology's (SSM's) contribution to achieving change in organisational culture\*;
- Identify what other factors are important.

The desired outcome is to achieve deeper understanding of how SSM can be used to achieve cultural change in organisations.

## 1.3 ASSUMPTIONS

The research is based on the following assumptions:

- Organisational culture can be changed; such change can be identified; and changing the culture of an organisation can be a positive strategy towards achieving improved effectiveness.
- Changes in the Weltanschauungen<sup>†</sup> of participants in an SSM project are indications of a change in some aspects of organisational culture (where a primary task<sup>‡</sup> approach is being used to determine the choice of relevant systems).

---

\* Organisational culture: "A sharing of values, beliefs, meaning, understanding, sense making, assumptions and expectations. (Zamutto & O'Connor, 1991, p 12)

<sup>†</sup> Weltanschauung: "... the (unquestioned) image or model of the world which makes the particular human activity system (with its particular transformation process) a meaningful one to consider". (Checkland, 1981 p 319)

<sup>‡</sup> Primary task system: "A notional system which can be related very directly either to an organisation as a whole or to a well-established task carried out by a section, department or division." (Checkland, 1981 p 222).



- Specific factors<sup>§</sup> in an organisation will be contributors to changes in Weltanschauungen occurring, eg:
  - The imperative to achieve cultural change (external forces, internal forces, incentives);
  - Flexibility of the organisation to accommodate change;
  - Leadership;
  - Degree of stakeholder participation in the SSM project.

#### 1.4 RESEARCH THEMES

When interviewing Checkland in September 1993 as part of this research, he emphasised that testing of hypotheses is not appropriate when conducting action research. Rather the approach should be to pose and learn about research ‘themes’. In keeping with Checkland’s advice, the term research theme has been used throughout this research rather than hypotheses, research questions or research assumptions.

The research will question the following research themes and draw conclusions to extend the theory of the use of SSM for organisational change projects:

1. Participants in an SSM project may achieve changes in Weltanschauungen, and such shifts can be identified.
2. Not all participants in an SSM project will have the same pre-project Weltanschauung, or the same changed Weltanschauung at the conclusion of the project. However, sufficient similarity of change will occur in a number of the participants to indicate cultural change has occurred (ie a group sharing of new values).

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<sup>§</sup> These factors have been derived from analysis of the literature of organisational culture and SSM, but are not intended to be exhaustive. (see Chapter 2).

3. Specific factors relating to both the organisation's environment, eg structure and culture (Pettigrew et al, 1992 p 271), and how the SSM project was carried out can be identified as significant to the changes in Weltanschauungen which occurred.

## 1.5 **CONDITIONS OF PROOF**


The following conditions of proof will enable the research themes to be evaluated:

- Belief that a change in Weltanschauung has occurred by:
  - Project Sponsor
  - Project Participants
  - Project Consultant.

*(Hard proof that cultural change has actually occurred and can be attributed to the use of SSM would be difficult to achieve in a dynamic social system. Since values are being measured, it can be argued that a perception by the individual that their own values have changed is relevant.*

*The beliefs of the sponsor, participants and consultant are separated because the majority of SSM research has been based on the reported views of the consultant, and to some extent of the sponsor (eg Checkland & Scholes 1990), but rarely, if ever, of the participants, who will usually be responsible for implementing the organisational change.)*

- A change in expression of Weltanschauung by SSM project participants, before and after the project, and an acceptable degree of similarity in the changed Weltanschauung by a majority of the participants.

*(However, it is recognised that simply asking the question will tend to shift the "before" value towards the "after" value.)* 

- Identification of contribution to change in Weltanschauungen by various techniques within SSM from the perspective of the participants of the case studies.

## **1.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION**

The above conditions of proof do not address the problem that identifying, in a particular situation, that the conditions have been met will not necessarily enable the results to be generalised to other SSM projects and other organisations. Therefore the research design will need to include approaches to enable generalisation (and hence ensure the validity of the research contribution), as well as meeting the conditions of proof.

## **1.7 CONCLUSION**

The research objective and research themes have assumed that changes can be achieved in an organisation's culture, but recognise that cultural change is a complex topic and a number of factors will impact upon it. To test this requires an understanding of the theory and practice in relation to organisational culture, including confirmation that cultural change can be achieved, and identification of what other factors will impact. Further, there is a desire in this research to understand if and how SSM can be used to assist the cultural change process - not only from the perspectives of the consultant and project sponsor, but more importantly from the viewpoints of the project participants (since they will inevitably be charged with the responsibility of implementing the organisational change initiatives identified in the SSM process.)

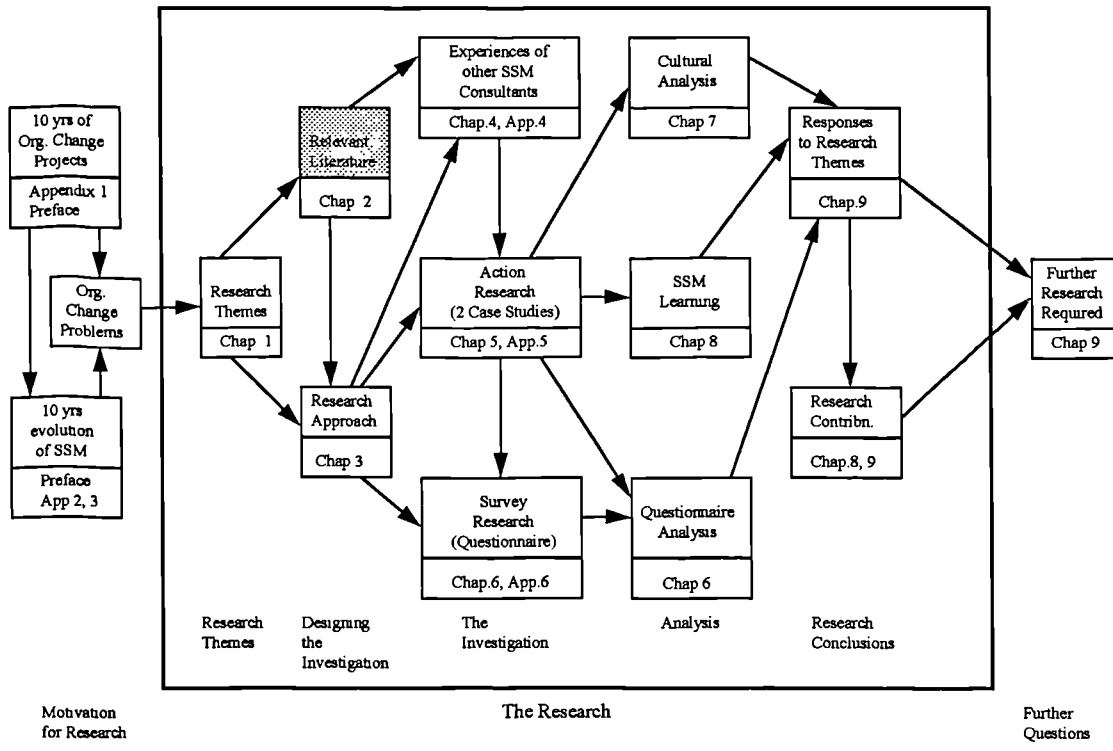
This chapter therefore impacts on:

- Literature searching in relation to both organisational culture and SSM (Chapter 2);
- Design of the method of investigation in order to explore the research themes, meet the conditions of proof, and ensure the conclusions can be generalised (Chapter 3). ✓

## CHAPTER 2

### RELEVANT LITERATURE

Map of the Structure of the Thesis



### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

As identified in Chapter 1, the research objective is to evaluate Soft Systems Methodology's (SSM's) contribution to achieving change in organisational culture, and to identify what other factors are important. The research assumes that a change in Weltanschauung by participants\* in an SSM project indicates some change in organisational culture, but recognises that organisational culture is a rich complex concept and that not all aspects of culture will change because Weltanschauungen change. Therefore, before being able to decide the method of investigation which will support the research objective (and indeed before being able to conduct the investigation) it was necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of organisational culture and how it can be changed. This understanding could then be

\* It is also assumed that the participants in the SSM project will be the stakeholders relevant to the organisation, or part of the organisation, being studied.

linked to an understanding of those aspects of the theory and practice of SSM which are of relevance to achieving cultural change.

In order to achieve this understanding, relevant literature was identified and evaluated, as shown below, grouped under the headings:

- **Organisational Culture:**
  - Definitions and Concepts
  - Can Organisational Culture be Changed?
  - Factors Influencing Cultural Change
  - Measures of Culture
  - Cultural Aspects of SSM
- **SSM:**
  - History of SSM
  - Nature of SSM
  - Evaluation of SSM and comparison with other approaches
  - How to Apply SSM
  - Uses of SSM

For each group, comments (in italics) and concluding remarks have been added to demonstrate how the literature contributed to this research.

## **2.2 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**

The following review of the literature on organisational culture includes evaluation of how this literature is relevant to SSM theory and practice.

### **2.2.1 Definitions and Concepts of Organisational Culture**

The first problem encountered in searching for an understanding of organisational culture was that there is no consensus as to how culture should be defined (Smircich 1983). However, the literature did indicate that the common elements of many of the definitions are that organisational culture involves shared values, beliefs, meaning,

understanding, sense making, assumptions and expectations (eg Zammuto and O'Connor 1991, Hofstede et al 1990, Edwards 1988, Ashforth 1985). In this sense, culture is viewed as being "... what is taught and reinforced to members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel, and act with regard to crises and tasks" (Lundberg 1990, p 19). These definitions appear to be compatible with the ethos of SSM, and the use of SSM to achieve cultural change, given Checkland and Scholes' (1990, p 28) description of SSM as:

... a methodology that aims to bring about improvements in areas of social concern by activating in the people involved in the situation a learning cycle which is ideally never-ending. The learning takes place through the iterative process of using systems concepts to reflect upon and debate perceptions of the real world, taking action in the real world, and again reflecting on the happenings using systems concepts. The reflection and debate is structured by a number of systemic models. ... [ *emphasis added*]

The emphasis on reflection and debate in SSM appears to be consistent with the cultural concepts of shared understanding and sense-making. Similarly, Checkland's (1981, p 319) definition of Weltanschauung which includes the concept of an "unquestioned image of the world which makes a particular human activity system meaningful" is also relevant to these views of culture being shared meaning (at least to the extent that a particular Weltanschauung is shared by a number of people in an organisation).

In addition, Reynolds (1986) identifies three inter-related concepts of organisational culture from the literature, all of which have relevance to this research. There is the concept of a cultural system based on myths, values and ideology (similar to the definitions above). A second concept is that of organisational culture as a socio-structural system based on organisational structure, strategies, policies and management processes [*changes in which, in the researcher's experience, are often outcomes of an SSM organisational change project*]. Thirdly, organisational culture can be viewed from the perspective of the individual members of the organisation with their own experiences and personality. [*Identification of the sentiments of individual members, before and after the SSM project, are relevant to the conditions of proof of this research*].

The relationship between cultural values and behaviour underpins the research of Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983), and their development of the competing values model to measure organisational effectiveness. Zammuto and Krakower (1991, p 83) link behaviour to culture in their definition, "Organisational culture can be defined as the patterns of values and ideas in organisations that shape human behaviour and its artifacts."

Also of relevance is the work of Smircich (1983), who takes a different approach and groups research into organisational culture into five categories:

1. Culture as an independent variable:

At the macro level, this refers to the literature which focuses on examining relationships between an organisation's culture and structure; and at a micro level the focus is the analysis of attitudes of managers in different cultures. Research focus tends to be on organisational effectiveness.

2. Culture as an internal variable:

This refers to the "glue" which holds organisations together. Research focuses on using culture to build organisational commitment.

3. Culture as a variable - a comparison:

This is a comparative management focus attempting to identify predictable approaches to organisational control and management.

4. Culture as a root metaphor for conceptualising organisation:

The view is that culture is something which an organisation *is*, rather than *has*. Research focuses on cognition, symbolism, structure and the unconscious mind - the psychodynamic perspective. For example, Nossiter and Biberman's (1990) use of projective drawing and metaphorical analogy fantasizing to compare workers' perceptions of culture.

5. Culture as a root metaphor - a comparison:



This is the use of comparative analysis applied to the cognitive, symbolic, structural and psychodynamic approach.

*[Items 1 to 3, effectiveness, commitment, management and control, are especially relevant as they are considered to be the underlying reasons for most SSM organisational change projects. For the case studies in this research, the concepts are included in the pre-workshop interviews, which are used to identify culture and sub-culture at the time the projects began, and are debated in the project workshops where the SSM action research takes place.]*

Morgan (1986, p 112) also develops the concept of metaphor to understand organisational life. His different metaphors depict organisations as machines, organisms, brains, cultures, psychic prisons, flux and transformation, and instruments of domination. Using the cultural metaphor, Morgan describes organisations as being managed and designed through norms, values, beliefs and rituals. Morgan suggests that the easiest way of understanding a culture is to observe it as an outsider or anthropologist, noticing patterns of interaction, language, images and themes used in conversation, and the daily routines and rituals. However, organisational culture may also be fragmented where people say one thing and do the other. (pp 121, 122).

*[Morgan's depiction of the role of the outsider in analysing culture is consistent with the way action research has been used, involving a researcher external to the organisation, in order to further learning about SSM, eg Checkland 1991, and the conduct of the case studies in this research; analysis of norms, values, beliefs and rituals has been included in the cultural analysis of the case study organisations in Chapter 7 of this research.]*

Yet another approach is taken by Faerman and Quinn (1985, p 84) who relate the concept of culture to the values of individual members and state "a consensual definition of organisational effectiveness would require that individuals value the same characteristics in organisations. This is an unlikely event." *[This is an important issue, since there is a temptation when using SSM to assume that a consensus must be*

*reached in choosing a single Weltanschauung , see Appendix 2, Adaptation of SSM.*

*In using the two case studies to investigate the research themes there was no expectation that all participants would reach a consensus in the choice of Weltanschauung.].* In contrast, however, Wilkof (1989) reports the case study of a US high technology company with a deliberate strategy to develop a culture based on consensus management.

Newman (1975) concludes that both organisational and personal characteristics impact on job attitudes, and therefore any organisational problem could be viewed as a people-environment system problem. *[Both organisational and personal characteristics have been included in the design of pre-project interviews and post-project questionnaires which aimed to understand culture in the case study organisations which form part of this research.]*

Ouchi and Wilkins (1985) state that while the history of research into organisational culture is influenced by anthropology, sociology, behavioural science, social psychology and management disciplines, the influence of sociology has been especially strong in the concept of an organisation as a social phenomenon which, although reflecting the sentiments of members and the outside environment, has its own definitive characteristics. *[This concept links with elements on general systems theory (Bertalanffy, 1968) which have been used in the researcher's adaptation of SSM, see Appendix 2, and especially in relation to the concept of the emergent properties.]*

In summary, the above literature shows congruence with the cultural focus within SSM. As described above, the design of this research was especially influenced by the concepts of culture relating to:

- The organisation and the individual (Reynolds 1986, Newman 1975);
- Organisational effectiveness, commitment, control and management (Smircich 1983);
- Norms, values, beliefs and rituals (Morgan 1986),

### 2.2.2 Can Organisational Culture Be Changed?

There was a need to confirm that other researchers had concluded that organisational culture can be changed, as this concept is critical to the research objective.

Edwards (1988) contends that culture can be changed, but with difficulty and over time. However, Frank (1987) warns that managers should not assume that culture can be manipulated. Wilkins and Ouchi (1983) are also sceptical about cultural change, emphasising that culture may not always be able to be used effectively as a tool for management control. Importantly, however, their research does differentiate the characteristics of organisational culture from cultural research focussing on clans and societies.

Although there are some organisational situations ... that approximate the community-like sharing of complex social understandings implied by the ethnographic paradigm, many organisations are socially fragmented. They do not provide the enculturation and social contact that could create a culture specific to the organisation. (*ibid* p 469)

Unlike the clans studied by anthropologists such as Mead (1949), members of organisations enter at adulthood and are subjected to a variety of other influences. Therefore, since organisations will rarely reach the depth of organisational richness of clans, the culture of organisations may more readily be changed. According to Wilkins and Ouchi (1983), the key parameter in acceptance of change will be the kind and amount of change required. The degree to which a culture can be changed will also depend on the depth of history, stable membership, absence of alternatives, interaction amongst members and shared goals. Further, Wilkins and Ouchi (*ibid* p 479) add that “when people believe that they will be treated fairly and that if they are honest they will have time to learn a new paradigm, they seem to be quite willing to experiment with new ideas”.

Other researchers, however, report deliberate strategies within organisations to change the corporate culture with a view to improving effectiveness. An example is the Pirelli organisation's focus to develop a high commitment, high involvement culture translated into partnerships between management and unions, flat organisational structure, problem solving groups, new information technology and enhanced reward systems to sponsor commitment (James 1991). Similarly, a project within UK building societies not only aimed to change culture to meet competition, but used a participative approach in involving managers to define their preferences for aspects of the culture which needed to be changed (Smith 1986).<sup>†</sup>

Wilhelm (1992) takes the view that behaviour can be changed while maintaining a strong existing corporate culture. Such behavioural change relies on leaders clearly enunciating corporate strategy and corporate values. *[Significantly, shared understanding of values is a component of the adapted version of SSM used for the case studies that form this research; the leaders were participants in the SSM process of the case studies; and considerations of whether behaviour change or cultural change occurred form part of the cultural analysis within this research, see Chapter 7.]*

Davies and Ledington (1991, p 41) describe the interlinkage of roles and values, and emphasise that while roles are relatively easy to renegotiate, values are difficult to change and need careful analysis in order for the culture of any problem situation (within an SSM project) to be understood. They go on to describe the conundrum that an insider will have difficulty in "seeing" the culture within an organisation, while an outsider will have difficulty in understanding it unless they become an insider. The alternative is for insiders and outsiders to seek to learn about the culture together. Authority (formal empowerment), power (the ability to make things happen) and politics (the processes whereby power commodities are formed) are also discussed as further components of culture (p 47).

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<sup>†</sup> Participative approaches underpin the use of SSM for this research and are also emphasised by Galliers et al (1994).

Ashforth (1985) presents a more dynamic view of organisational culture, concluding that “currently most organisations are culturally permissive, allowing values, norms, beliefs, and perceptions to emerge spontaneously” (p 843). Similarly Morgan (1986, p 112) describes culture, in both society and organisations, as an "active living phenomenon through which people create and recreate the worlds in which they live."

The conclusions for this research are:

- Aspects of organisational culture can be changed, but with difficulty (Edwards 1988). *[This at least confirms that the research objective has validity.]*
- It is likely that roles are more easy to change than values (Davies and Ledington (1991). *[This concept is evaluated in more detailed in Chapter 8 and is critical to the conclusions of the research.]*
- Organisational culture is a dynamic concept, constantly evolving (Ashforth 1985, Morgan 1986). *[While this concept supports the argument above that culture can change, it also cautions against the view that the difference between culture before and after an SSM project, ie changed Weltanschauungen, can be objectively measured as if culture was a stable concept which did not alter until “changed”.]*
- Interlinked with this discussion of ability to change culture was consideration of factors such as degree of change to be achieved, absence of alternatives, organisational characteristics (eg history, stability), and member characteristics (interaction, shared goals), (Wilkins and Ouchi 1983). *[Such factors are considered in more detail in the following section and impact on the research design in terms of identifying other factors contributing to organisational change, apart from the SSM process.]*

### **2.2.3 Factors Influencing Cultural Change**

Identifying the other factors, apart from the SSM process itself, which impact on the achievement of change in organisational culture, is central to the research objective, research themes and conditions of proof. The literature, as outlined below, shows a complexity of factors, highlighting the difficulty in selecting and including these concepts in the research design.

Pettigrew et al (1992, pp 267-299) attempt to identify organisations which are receptive to change. They question why the rate and pace of change differs across different National Health Service (NHS) localities, and from the literature identify the following factors:

- The organisation's environment, ie structure and culture which, if integrative, will support change, while if segmented, will not.

An integrative structure and culture is characterised by holistic problem-solving, team-orientation, cooperation, strong idea generation and exchange, sense of purpose and direction, and an environment which is innovative and stimulating.

- The degree of flexibility, based on networks internal and external to the organisation, rather than bureaucracy.

Flexibility will also result from a focus on persons not positions, creativity rather than efficiency, results not rules, teams not hierarchies, and leverage and experimentation rather than ownership and control.

- The ability to sustain change based on buffering the change programme from short term pressures.

- A receptive context for human resource change.

Pettigrew's (*ibid*) work with the NHS identified eight factors which indicate receptive contexts for change. These are:

1. The quality of policy generated at local level.
2. Availability of key people leading change.
3. Long term environmental pressure - intensity and scale.
4. A supportive organisational culture (ie flexible working across boundaries rather than formal hierarchies, focus on skill rather than rank, open risk-taking approach, openness to research and evaluation, strong value basis, strong self image and sense of achievement).
5. Effective managerial-clinical relations (ensuring the clinicians were not in opposition to the change programme).
6. Cooperative inter-organisational networks.
7. Simplicity and clarity of goals and priorities.
8. The fit between the District's change agenda and its locale.

Johnson (1992) explains the links between organisational culture, strategy and managerial behaviour. "Logical incrementalism", the gradual development and testing of strategy, (Quinn 1978, 1980) is rejected as an explanation of management behaviour; rather Johnson emphasises that the organisation's cultural paradigm, embedded in the beliefs of the dominant management group, reinforces the current way of doing things and results in resistance to strategic change. The business environment is filtered to make sense in terms of the cultural paradigm and strategy ceases to

respond to external forces, resulting in strategic inertia and strategic drift. Johnson proposes that managers should carry out a culture audit to help to make the cultural paradigm explicit and create the basis for debate about the cultural changes required.

*[Johnson's (1992) view that cultural change is a critical part of effective strategy formulation, to avoid "logical incrementalism", is consistent with the viewpoint within SSM that debating changed Weltanschauungen is key to defining relevant human activity systems and hence, via comparison with the "real world", developing strategies for change.]*

Edwards (1988) discusses strong versus weak cultures in terms of the degree of shared understanding and clarity in decision making. He cautions that strong cultures may lead to inflexibility. Gordon and DiTomaso (1992) investigate the relationship of cultural strength and corporate performance, focussing on adaptability and stability.

Other research, (Wilkins and Ouchi 1983), suggests that not all organisational cultures will have a relevance to organisational performance (since some organisations are socially fragmented), while some cultures will promote, and others inhibit effectiveness.

Leadership by an organisation's management is seen by a number of researchers to be an important element in defining and changing organisational culture. Walsham (1991, p 88) defines leadership as "involving the management of meaning, recognising that effective organisational change implies cultural change". Similarly, from a cultural perspective it is suggested that management has the responsibility to enunciate a philosophy which makes clear the organisation's goals (Ouchi and Price 1978), and to articulate and embody the organisation's mission and goals (Van de Ven 1983). Edwards (1988) states that management causes cultural beliefs to be held. Frank (1987) states that an organisation's culture can be understood by identifying what managers pay attention to or reward.



It has also been suggested that in developing new strategies, leaders should assess cultural risk by understanding the gap between the current culture and the cultural change implied by the strategy (Schwartz and Davis 1981), an approach which is similar to the questioning of feasible and desirable change at the gap analysis stage in the adaptation of SSM used for this research (see Appendix 2). Resistance to change is also a focus of Schein (1983) and Gitlow (1992). From this perspective, organisational culture is seen as the way people learn to cope with anxiety. Attempts to change culture will threaten the individual and such change will only be likely to succeed where the culture is under strong challenge, or where there is personal and deep top management involvement in steering the cultural change.

*[The concept of leaders playing a key role in achieving organisational change, as well as information system success, links well to this research, since SSM has been seen as an effective "front end" to information systems planning, eg Galliers 1988, Wilson 1984].*

Power, politics and disunity are also important variables in organisational culture, impacting on the success of socio-technical approaches to information systems design, which presume that it is possible to satisfy both technology needs and human hopes and desires (Walsham 1991). *[The fine line between effective, but democratic, participative leadership and the use of politics and power to reach a new vision and hence cultural change is important in the context of the case studies used in this research, since a high level of leadership involvement in strategic projects (and in the case studies) is a characteristic of the organisation used for the action research.]*

Structure is an important aspect of the way an organisation attempts to reinforce shared values and beliefs (Zammuto and O'Connor 1991). Drucker (1988) traces the history of organisational change and organisational structure, from the separation of ownership from management at the turn of the twentieth century, to the development of the typical command and control type organisations which are still found today. Drucker discusses the next shift in structure to information-based organisations staffed by knowledge specialists. Jerome-Forget (1992) suggests that a structural

reorganisation may be critical to achieving cultural change in an organisation.

*[Structure, as it relates to organisational culture and cultural change, is central to the business objectives of the case studies which form part of this research.]*

Understanding the impact of culture on many types of organisational strategies is a common theme in the literature. For example, Thomas (1989) describes the effects of culture on management's choice of accounting methods and Kirkbridge (1987) focuses on the impact of culture on the practice and philosophy of personnel management.

It must also be acknowledged that a single organisational change project alone will not achieve sustained cultural change - rather an ongoing reinforcement by messages from management which are credible, consistent and continuous is required (Krawczyk 1992).

In conclusion, literature was selected which demonstrated the wide range and complexity of factors influencing cultural change in organisations, as it is important for this research that a simplistic conclusion is not reached in regard to the impact of SSM in achieving cultural change. The following concepts were considered especially significant for the research design:

- The work of Pettigrew et al (1992) was used in this research to evaluate the receptiveness to cultural change of the case study organisations (see Chapter 7).
- Leadership as a factor impacting on organisational culture (eg Walsham 1991, Ouchi and Price 1978, Edwards 1988, Frank 1987) was evaluated in the pre-workshop interviews and post-project questionnaires for the case study organisations (see Chapter 5 and Appendix 5).
- The importance of organisational structure, and structural redesign, in achieving cultural change (eg Zammuto and O'Connor 1991, Drucker 1988, Jerome-Forget 1992) was significant because one of the business objectives of the case studies was to identify opportunities to restructure as part of a process of organisational change. The literature confirmed that restructuring was a viable outcome, along with other strategies, of an organisational change project.

#### 2.2.4 Measures of Culture

As shown above, definitions and concepts of culture have been researched, the question has been addressed as to whether organisational culture can be changed, and factors influencing cultural change have been identified. However, for the purpose of this research it was also necessary to find ways to measure organisational culture in order to be able to describe, from a cultural perspective, the environment in which each piece of action research (ie case study) occurred, and hence be able to generalise the applicability of the outcomes for other organisations.

The literature below has been selected to give an indication of the ways of measuring culture and the difficulties involved.

The search for measures of culture is shown in the work of many researchers. Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983), Faerman and Quinn (1985), and Zamutto and O'Connor (1991) describe the Competing Values Approach to measuring aspects of organisational culture and hence determining organisational effectiveness. Three value dimensions are involved - organisational focus, organisational structure, and organisational means and ends.

Faerman and Quinn (*ibid*, p 91)) link organisational effectiveness and organisational culture, and identify that organisational culture is based on values about:

1. Organisational purpose
2. Valued criteria of performance
3. The location of authority
4. Legitimate bases of power
5. Decision making orientations
6. Style of leadership
7. Compliance
8. Evaluation
9. Motivation

Lange (1991) identified seven rites in business as a means of identifying organisational culture, ie rites of passage, enhancement, degradation, conflict reduction, integration,

renewal and style. By measuring these Lange evaluated the degree of common values manifested through the rites, as a way to identifying strong organisational culture.

Pritchard and Karasick (1973) developed a questionnaire to evaluate organisational climate involving eleven factors:

1. Autonomy
2. Conflict vs cooperation
3. Social relations
4. Supportiveness
5. Structure
6. Level of rewards
7. Performance-reward dependency
8. Achievement
9. Status polarisation
10. Flexibility and innovation
11. Decision centralisation

Reynolds (1986) analysed the work of other researchers and defined and tested fourteen measures of culture (presented in popularity order based on their frequency in the literature):

1. External vs internal emphasis
2. Task vs social focus
3. Safety vs risk
4. Conformity vs individuality
5. Individual vs group rewards
6. Individual vs collective decision-making
7. Centralised vs decentralised decision-making
8. Ad hockery vs planning
9. Stability vs innovation
10. Cooperation vs competition
11. Simple vs complex organisation
12. Informal vs formalised procedures
13. High vs low loyalty
14. Ignorance vs knowledge of organisational expectations.

The search for measures of culture becomes more complex with the work of Tucker et al (1990) where 55 items are used to develop a multiscale survey of organisational culture, aimed to assist managers to develop strategies to solve problems relating to organisational culture.

Davies and Ledington (1991, p 45), working within the context of SSM, identified a range of cultural attributes and developed specific questions to test them. The attributes are:

1. History
2. Contingency
3. Symbolic Forms
4. Formalisms
5. Behaviours
6. Personal Identity
7. Role Models
8. Rituals and Rites

The complexity of interpreting cultural research is highlighted by the literature which indicates that people in different organisational positions, different industries, and different nations will have different perceptions about their work environment, reflecting different organisational cultures. (Reynolds 1986; Kelley 1986) "To expect the same socio structural system, cultural systems, and organisational participants to foster success in all industries seems quite naive." (Reynolds, p 344)

In addition, any organisation is likely to have multiple subcultures, further complicating the analysis of organisational culture (Smircich 1983). Subculture divisions may be based on professional groups, social or ethnic groupings, different loyalties (eg personal career rather than the organisation, or the organisation as a means of furthering friendship), and these divisions may result in coalitions which form countercultures, in opposition to the organisation's espoused values, and resulting in a struggle for control (Morgan, 1986 p 127).

The complexity of cultural analysis and the range of alternatives caused problems in choosing relevant measures for this research, and especially since cultural analysis was only one component of the method of investigation, and not the sole purpose of research as had been the case in much of the work identified above. The following decisions were made:

- While many of the approaches to understanding or measuring organisational culture could have been used in the case studies, the organisational culture values identified by Faerman and Quinn (1983) were eventually selected as the basis for evaluating pre-project culture via the structured interviews with Case Study 1 participants. Their work was chosen because of its linkage to an understanding of organisational effectiveness, since both case study projects aimed to identify ways to improve organisational effectiveness in meeting clients' needs. Their criteria were also similar to the type of debate the researcher had used in other pre-interviews as part of SSM projects, and hence assisted in the evaluation of the approach to SSM which the researcher had developed over ten years of consultancy projects. In addition, the criteria were considered suitable for investigating in a one hour interview.
- The cultural attributes developed by Davies and Ledington (1991) were selected as the basis for the researcher to record personal interpretations of the culture of the case study organisations. This choice was made because the attributes and associated questions had been developed and tested within an SSM context and used in a similar way to this research. In addition, the clarity of the questions greatly assisted interpretation of the attributes, making the measures easy to use.
- Consideration of the existence and impact of sub-cultures within the case study organisations (Smircich 1983, Morgan 1986) was included in the researcher's personal account of the case studies, as well as in the cultural analysis.

### **2.2.5 Cultural Aspects of SSM**

Aspects of organisational culture and SSM are closely interlinked in this research since change in Weltanschauungen is being used as an indication of cultural change, and the SSM cultural stream of analysis is a focus within later versions of the methodology (Checkland and Scholes 1990). For completeness from a cultural perspective, the

cultural discussion of SSM has been included in this section, rather than with the main treatment of SSM research which follows.

Mingers (1980) takes a cultural perspective when he discusses Checkland's concept of *Weltanschauung* as being based on individual purpose, knowledge, values, and expectations which develop through experience, and which result in individuals within an organisation having different, yet equally valid, ways of interpreting the world. Where there are multiple, conflicting *Weltanschauungen*, then there will inevitably be difficulties in defining problems and solutions in an organisational context. However, Mingers emphasises the difficulty in achieving a more shared *Weltanschauung* because individuals will cling to their own interpretation.

Checkland's description of SSM as an appreciative system (after Vickers 1968) is further developed by Davies and Ledington (1991, p 40) who interpret the appreciative setting as synonymous with the culture of the situation.

Checkland (1985b) also highlights that conceptual models are part of organisational learning and their use helps people to determine what should be done at a particular moment in time to improve a specific situation. Cultural values inevitably shape this process. As such "SSM encompasses but also transcends the logic of situations; its focus is the cultural processes which lead to purposeful action." (*ibid* p 831)

Checkland has increased the focus on cultural analysis in a later version of SSM (Checkland and Scholes, 1990) in which the cultural stream of analysis is introduced, involving the examination of the intervention itself, the social system and the political system. Learning about culture takes place throughout this revised view of the methodology, in contrast to the earlier seven step process (eg Checkland 1981) which implied that cultural analysis was restricted to the first two steps.

Checkland and Scholes (1990, p 30) add that identification of "relevant" human activity systems will in itself give an indication of the culture of the organisation, while

choice of suitable changes will need to take into consideration what is culturally feasible.

Finally, Checkland and Scholes discuss changes in Weltanschauung which can occur in an SSM project:

“What is probably more important (but usually escapes the files) is the change in perceptions which takes place in the heads of users of SSM as the methodology is used. The cycle from perceptions to relevant systems, to models, to new perceptions, is an organised way of thinking one’s way to clearer, or new, perceptions. In terms of ultimately taking purposeful action to improve a problematical situation, it is the original perceptions and the new perceptions which are crucial, not the models. And it is the difference between the two sets of perceptions which stimulates the debate about change. The importance of the methodological skeleton is that it makes the thinking process coherent and capable of being shared.” (*ibid* p 67)

The above literature about cultural aspects of SSM is important to this research in the following ways:

- Recognition by Checkland and Scholes (*ibid*) that it is the change “in the heads of users” from one set of perceptions to another that results in meaningful debate about change supports the aim in this research to identify whether participants achieve change in Weltanschauungen which can be described as cultural change.
- Mingers’ (1990) discussion of Weltanschauung as the values of the individual, the unlikelihood of everyone having the same Weltanschauung, and the difficulties in defining problems and solutions which arise where there are multiple different Weltanschauung in an organisation concurs with the views of Faerman and Quinn (1985), and has implications both for identifying the Weltanschauung of each individual in the case studies and for identifying degree of difference or similarity.
- The view that cultural values shape the building of conceptual models (Checkland 1985b) indicates that the process of modelling in the case studies could be significant for achieving/reinforcing a shift in Weltanschauungen. In this research,



however, in the Case Study 1 post-project questionnaire (aimed at ranking what factors contributed to the change in Weltanschauungen), the participants ranked models as the least significant factor, contrary to the views of the researcher and project sponsor.

- The cultural stream of analysis (Checkland and Scholes, 1990) is used as one of the approaches to cultural evaluation of the case studies in this research (see Chapter 8).

### **2.2.6 Conclusion**

The above literature shows that organisational culture can be changed, but with difficulty; and indicates that culture must be understood from both the perspective of the individual and the organisation. It is also evident that much of the theory of organisational culture underpins SSM's theory and practice. Further, the differences in various researchers' conclusions about the appropriate measures of culture and the factors affecting cultural change highlight the complexity of these topics.

Analysis of this literature confirmed the validity of the research objective, research themes, assumptions and conditions of proof; assisted in the formulation of pre-workshop interviews and post-project questionnaires for the action research; and provided frameworks for the cultural analysis of the case study organisations.

The following section of literature builds on this cultural understanding and provides a deeper insight into the nature and practice of SSM, which is considered a prerequisite to being able to interpret how SSM can contribute to changes in organisational culture.

## **2.3 SSM**

Viewing SSM as a broad approach to learning about ways of improving situations where groups of people are involved in some purposeful activity raises a number of

key issues. For example, What precisely is SSM? How should it be applied? How does one decide to what extent the methodology used was indeed SSM? How does one evaluate whether the use of SSM was successful - that is, were perceptions of success or failure of an SSM project attributable to the sponsor, the facilitator, the participants, external factors or the methodology? These are all key questions for the objective of this research and impact on decisions as to an appropriate method(s) of investigation.

Given that SSM is a methodology capable of being adapted to each user's requirements, and not a prescriptive technique where specific outcomes can be guaranteed ( Checkland, 1972 p 7), it is not surprising that the literature shows a range of understanding, interpretation and appreciation of SSM. To assist analysis, the SSM literature is considered under the following headings:

- History of SSM
- Nature of SSM
- Evaluation of SSM
- How to Apply SSM
- Uses of SSM.

### **2.3.1 History of SSM**

An understanding of the history and evolution of SSM is important in providing the context for this research, and to provide a broad comparison with the researcher's own adaptation of the methodology (see Appendix 2).

Checkland (1972) provides a detailed account of the early evolution of SSM, linking it to the systems movement and general systems theory, and emphasising the attempt to be holistic in addressing human activity. The concepts from the systems movement and General Systems Theory (Bertalanffy 1968) which underpin SSM are the specific characteristics of systems, such as the system's boundary and external environment, connectivity within the system resulting in the system exhibiting behaviour, the ability of the system to survive, emergence, hierarchy, communication and control.

Between 1972 and 1990 considerable further evolution occurred in SSM. By 1990, Checkland and Scholes had moved away from the initial seven step iterative process which Checkland had used to explain the methodology (Checkland 1972, 1981) to a “rich picture” type model to represent the process within SSM. The new model depicts a real world problem situation (with its history), would-be improvers of the problem situation, the situation as a culture, issues, and relevant systems (modelled and compared with the present situation, with comparison including both a stream of cultural analysis and a logic-based stream of analysis). Outcomes are changes which are systemically desirable and culturally feasible, leading to action to improve the situation.

Also relevant to this evolution of SSM is Checkland and Scholes’ (1990) definition of the way SSM is used as “Mode 1” or “Mode 2”, where Mode 1 represents the step by step application of the methodology, and Mode 2 a deeper appreciation and more intuitive use:

"The ideal type Mode 2, however, takes SSM itself as its framework of ideas, takes as its methodology conscious reflection upon interactions with the flux of events and ideas, and takes as its focus of enquiry the process of learning one’s way to purposeful improvement of problem situations. This sharply delineates Mode 2 as a meta-level use of SSM compared with Mode 1 ..." (*ibid* p 281)

*[This researcher’s use of the methodology between 1984 and 1994 has evolved as significantly as did the use by Checkland, as described above, but in a different way. The steps used by the researcher (see Appendix 2) are, in general, similar to the 7 step process, but with the researcher as facilitator rather than analyst; however, the application is close to Checkland and Scholes’ ideal type 2. Evaluation of how SSM was used for the action research, from a Mode 1 or Mode 2 perspective is included in Chapter 8.]*

### **2.3.2 Nature of SSM**

This section of the literature builds on the history and evolution of SSM, and focuses especially on Checkland’s explanations of methodology, learning, communication,

participation and iteration, all of which are relevant to the way the two case studies were carried out.

Checkland (1972, p 7) defines methodology as “an explicit, ordered, non-random way of carrying out an activity”. He highlights the dilemma that theoretically methodology should be content free, while in practice the content inevitably impacts on the methodology. Similarly, he emphasises that methodology must not be “flabby”, yet must avoid the precise, prescriptive, goal oriented methodologies stemming from the systems analysis discipline - SSM must be “precise yet vague”. Further, Checkland emphasises that it is important to differentiate between a methodology and a method or technique where a particular result can be guaranteed if the steps are followed.

Methodologies, such as SSM, must be capable of being adapted to each user's personal style. The outcomes will depend on the context, use and user. (Checkland, 1986, 1972). *[For the case studies the methodology was adapted and a type of generic model evolved which was new to the researcher, but met the requirements of the situation, See Appendix 5.]*

Checkland's writing shows a strong focus on viewing SSM as a learning system (eg Checkland 1983, 1985a, 1985b, Atkinson and Checkland 1988), summed up in Checkland and Scholes (1990, p 15) - “Its parent was systems engineering, and it moved experientially from an approach aimed at optimising a system to an approach based on articulating and enacting a systemic process of learning.”

Further, the view of SSM as a learning system has dual meaning - not only learning about the particular human activity system which is the focus of the project, but learning about methodology itself. There is a further duality about SSM, since the methodology not only aims to improve the problem situation, but also changes the values and attitudes of the people within the problem situation (Atkinson, 1986).

*[These concepts are all relevant to the action research. Midway through the case studies the managers involved recognised the learning about methodology which was occurring and asked that the researcher reinforce this by providing an SSM course*

*once the projects were completed; this research was designed to use the case studies as a way of learning about SSM; and it was the intent of the case studies that they provide a learning opportunity for participants where values and attitudes would change.]*

Checkland (1985a, p 762) also relates SSM to the concept of an appreciative system, as developed by Vickers (eg 1986). This concept rejects the goal seeking behaviour model preferring a “relationship maintaining” perspective. As Checkland summarises:

“An appreciative system is a cultural mechanism which maintains desired relationships and eludes undesired ones. The process is cyclic and operates like this: our previous experiences have created for us certain standards or norms, usually tacit (and also, at a more general level, values, more general concepts of what is humanly good or bad); the standards, norms and values lead to readiness to notice only certain features of our situations; they determine what ‘facts’ are relevant: the facts noticed are evaluated against the norms, a process which *both* leads to our taking regulatory action and modifies the norms or standards, so that future experiences will be evaluated differently.”

*[This is further evidence of the cultural theory which underpins SSM.]*

Davies and Ledington (1991, p 52)) take the view that the primary purpose of SSM is to enhance communication. Checkland (1985b) also emphasises that the development of models within SSM provides the basis for “rich debate about possible problem interventions that will be both desirable for system improvement yet culturally feasible to enact”. Atkinson (1986, p 20) also takes the communication view in describing conceptual models as not prescriptive, rather “they are relevant to initiating debate”.

*[The researcher’s adaptation of SSM, Appendix 2, emphasises that SSM is viewed as a communication system.]*

The need for SSM to be a truly participative approach has evolved with the use of the methodology and is now considered by many users to be a critical element of SSM.

Use of a facilitator to manage participative, workshop style sessions contrasts with earlier approaches where stakeholders were interviewed and models were developed by analysts in the back-room (see this researcher’s article with Galliers et al 1994).

“The aim of an intervention is to donate the approach to the participants in the problem

situation, to get them to use it and to leave them with the ability to use it in future.”

(Checkland, 1986, p 2)

*[See also this researcher's adaptation of SSM, Appendix 2.]*

The iterative aspects of SSM expounded in all of Checkland's work are emphasised by McLoughlin (1986, p 20) who views SSM as essentially a cyclic process where “the methodology structures the problem situation instead of taking the problem as stated”.

*[Iteration was an important component of Case Study 1, where definition of Role, ie Weltanschauung, was returned to many times, and not decided upon until towards the end of the project.]*

In summary, the above literature highlights the congruence between this researcher's philosophy and practice of SSM and the broad concepts in the literature, even though specific adaptations of the methodology have been made, as described in Appendix 2 and the discussion of the case studies, Appendix 5.

### **2.3.3 Evaluation of SSM**

Identifying and understanding the impact of the weaknesses of SSM is important to concluding whether and how SSM can contribute to change in organisational culture. The literature below has been selected to highlight the debate relating to the evaluation of SSM.

Many comparisons have been made between SSM and critical systems thinking, in most cases to emphasise the weaknesses of SSM (and other systems thinking work, eg Churchman and Ackoff) in terms of human emancipation (see Jackson, 1982, 1985, 1991b).

Critical systems thinking aims to address these weaknesses, based upon five "pillars":

- Critical awareness:

Critical thinking about methodology and underlying assumptions;

- Social awareness:  
Recognition of organisational pressures which make particular methodologies acceptable or appropriate;
- Complementarism at the methodological level:  
Availability of a meta methodology encompassing all critical systems thinking approaches;
- Complementarism at the theoretical level:  
Commitment to the complementary and informed development of a range of systems approaches;
- Dedication to human emancipation:  
Commitment to achieve for all individuals the maximum development of their potential.

Jackson (1991b) argues that SSM addresses only the first of these pillars.

Mingers (1980) draws comparisons between SSM and critical social theory (critical systems thinking), and especially the work of Habermas (1974). Checkland and Habermas are considered similar in their classification of human action as purposeful activity, their conclusion that systems analysis is mistaken in its use of technical rationality to solve real world, human problems, and in their aim to assist people to be able to solve their own problems.

However, Mingers also identifies major differences between Habermas and Checkland since Habermas is a “political radical” and critical theory aims to achieve emancipatory benefits for members of society (changing the structure of society), while Checkland’s focus is problem solving within society - “piece-meal social engineering”. (*ibid* p 47). Mingers also emphasises that outlining possible alternative Weltanschauungen is not enough to change people’s fundamental beliefs because of inherent resistance to change. Therefore, SSM has generally been used in a conservative way, preserving the Weltanschauungen of the powerful.

suggests that such an approach could be based on the theories of Habermas and critical systems thinking.

Spear (1987) also concurs that SSM is limited in its ability to explain major change and conflict. Rather, he sees SSM as tending to be conservative in the kind of changes emanating from its use.

Checkland (1982, p 37), in contrast, argues that SSM could be used in a conservative and regulative way, or in a radical and emancipatory mode, and that Weltanschauungen do change, sometimes in an evolutionary way and sometimes radically.

Kreher (1993, p 305) acknowledges resistance to change, but adds that this problem is not exclusive to SSM, and states that from this perspective no methodology is neutral. Kreher's conclusion is that "SSM in principle is capable of accommodating and absorbing critical theory within its compass".

*[The critical system thinking debate is significant to this research which attempts to understand whether SSM can assist the achievement of cultural change. However, it is important to recognise that the case study projects in this research are aiming to achieve improved organisational effectiveness. While in the case studies this perspective included the view that individuals should also benefit by achieving greater fulfilment by carrying out meaningful and challenging work in a supportive team environment, there was no intention to completely change the structure of society or resolve the world's problems of hunger, disease, poverty or pollution, which is central to many of the concerns of the exponents of critical theory, eg Mingers, 1980 p 47].*

A number of researchers have attempted to explain and evaluate SSM, often by comparing it with other methodologies, theories or philosophies.

Checkland (eg 1972, 1983, 1985b, Gilchrist and Checkland 1984) contrasts SSM's soft approach of learning about human affairs with the hard approaches of operations research, systems analysis, systems engineering and rational intervention. He emphasises the failures of systems science when applied to organisational systems because of its inability to encompass human values. These human values lead to lack



of agreement on such organisational fundamentals as needs, objectives and measures of performance - not only because of lack of understanding or information, but because different people have different ways of viewing the world.

Brown (1992, 1993) suggests that there would be benefits in combining SSM with grounded theory, and especially in Stages 1 and 2 of the SSM seven step model, for example in assisting the formulation of rich pictures. Brown (1993, p 309) explains grounded theory as “a style of qualitative analysis which provides guidelines for the collection and examination of soft data that is sensitive to contextual idiosyncrasies”. The combination with SSM would be particularly relevant where there was a demand for intellectual rigour, and where the results were to be communicated to a scholarly audience.

Mathiassen and Nielsen (1989) compare SSM with dialectical approaches to social theory and action, specifically highlighting the following aspects of SSM which are similar to dialectics:

- The distinction between taking action in the real world and thinking about the real world in terms of conceptual systems;
- The concept of emergent properties which negates a reductionist approach;
- The concepts of process, structure and climate in defining rich pictures;
- The development of a number of different Weltanschauungen, which may conflict;
- The comparison stage which debates the different between system views and real world situations;
- The criteria of feasible and desirable change.

Mathiassen and Nielsen believe that it is these elements of SSM which make it especially powerful for organisational change and information systems projects.

Atkinson and Checkland (1988) question whether SSM is limited by being based on the concept of systems as adaptive wholes able to survive change - which is at the core

of systems thinking. They suggest alternative systems models which could be incorporated within SSM, i.e.:

- a) Abandon the concept of "purposeful" which is implicit within systems thinking, introducing instead Carvajal's (1983, 1986) concept of "systemicnetfields". The concept is of less tight relationships than in the traditional systems model, rather of networks or aggregates. An example is provided of a co-operative as a contradictory system.
- b) Combine adaptive wholes into larger entities, opening up a range of potential relationships, eg combative, host/parasite, syndicalistic.

However, Atkinson and Checkland conclude by expressing concern that this thinking might lead to viewing models as parts of the real world, rather than as models relevant to the debate, which they describe as "the biggest single liberating step in the new systems thinking." (*ibid* p 723)

Keys (1991) in analysing the linkage of SSM and information systems development emphasises the multiplicity of perspective as one of the most useful aspects of SSM.

In an attempt to find appropriate approaches to designing decision support systems, Holt (1988) uses SSM to compare phenomenological approaches (where systems are viewed as existing within the mental constructs of observers), with empirical, positivist approaches based on structuring problems based on observing and measuring.

Checkland (1981, p 277) also places SSM within the thinking of phenomenology and hermeneutics:

"... we have in phenomenology and hermeneutics an attitude towards social science which takes as its prime datum not the world external to observers of it, but the observer's mental processes. This extension of the interpretive tradition of social science offers a 'human-culturalistic' approach to compare and contrast with the 'positivistic-naturalistic' approach ..."

Kiountouzis and Papatheodoru (1990) compare SSM with distributed artificial intelligence systems (DAI), concluding that both are based on open systems theory, but

DAI, unlike SSM, has no “concrete methodology” by which to analyse systems behaviour. (However, Checkland may query whether SSM is indeed concrete, rather than constantly evolving.)

The difficulty of differentiating between the success of the methodology and the expertise in its application is highlighted in O’Connor’s evaluation of SSM (1992). The application of the methodology which he considers appears to have been analyst driven rather than participative (with root definitions and conceptual models formulated as a result of interviews). [*Perhaps, not surprisingly, “the users did not perceive themselves as owning the problems identified and solutions developed by the planning team and perceived the methodologies applied by the group as inapplicable to their needs.” (ibid, p 134)*]

Smith and Watson (1992) recognised the problem of defining whether the methodology used was SSM, and developed a methodology for the critical analysis of studies which claim to be based upon SSM. Atkinson (1986) also addresses this issue, questions the family resemblance which characterises methodologies as being soft and systemic, and concludes that the way SSM is used for a specific project is dependent on context, the use and the users.

In summary, the above literature is central to this research for the following reasons:

1. The critical systems thinking debate raises questions about SSM’s ability to achieve significant change in organisational culture.
2. The discussion by Atkinson and Checkland (1988) of alternative systems models, eg applicable to a cooperative, was the view taken in the case studies of the wider system, ie the Crown Law Department, of which Corporate Services was a part. The reason for this view was the conflicting roles, and hence degree of autonomy required, between various parts of the wider system, eg between the Courts and the Director of Public Prosecutions.

3. The problem of differentiating between the success of the methodology and the expertise in its application was critical to investigating the research themes. In fact the participants ranked the impact of the facilitator very highly (see Chapter 6). The role of facilitator is further developed in this research based on the interviews with other SSM consultants/researchers (see Chapter 4 and Appendix 4).

#### **2.3.4 How to Apply SSM**

The non-prescriptive nature of SSM had led many writers to provide additional guidelines for its application, as has this researcher (see Appendix 2). The literature below has been provided to give a broad indication of the range of suggestions, contrasting with the concluding comment by Checkland and Scholes (1990) that real understanding of SSM occurs once use of the methodology becomes internalised tacit knowledge - invisible.

Checkland, as the founder of SSM, has written extensively about how the methodology may be applied. A number of other researchers have also provided guidelines, for example Galliers (1987), Patching (1987), Davis and Ledington (1991).

Other writers concentrate on specific aspects of SSM. Lewis (1992a) discusses guidelines for rich picture diagrams. Avison et al (1993, 1992) also focus on assisting the development of rich pictures, and provide a computerised diagramming tool. Kreher (1993), however, emphasises that SSM is a user driven methodology and cautions against prescribing tools, as they may not meet the user's expectations or be appropriate in specific circumstances.

Von Bulow (1989) explains the concept of a human activity system, and the importance of understanding that the boundary of such a system is not real but a construct. The size of the boundary is dictated by the transformation process, and must not mirror either the organisational or physical boundary.

Watson (1992) focuses on the need for better guidelines on how to develop conceptual models, arguing that they are not mechanically derived from root definitions, as suggested by Checkland and Wilson. Woodburn (1985) had previously identified this need and had developed the idea of logical dependency within conceptual models and coined the acronym DIME (dependency, information, material, energy).

Davies and Ledington's (1991) guide to SSM, also places emphasis on the drawing of conceptual models, introducing symbols to denote different types of relationships.

Mingers and Taylor (1992) found from their survey that SSM was considered time consuming to use, possibly unsuitable for managers, and requiring more than a one day short course for training. *[This contrasts with this researcher's use of SSM for the case studies which form part of this research.]*

Other researchers not only provide guidance, but have sought to expand the use of SSM by adding to the methodology. For example:

Doyle et al (1993)	Use of conceptual models in information system development.
Galliers et al (1991)	Combining decision conferencing and SSM.
Galliers (1991a,1992a)	Adding a scenario-based approach for strategic information system planning.
Gregory (1993)	Adding "sufficiency" to conceptual models as a basis for information systems design.
Keys (1991)	Integrating SSM with other approaches for information system development.
Lewis (1991)	Contribution of "appreciation" in SSM to decision making for information systems.
Lewis (1992b, 1993)	Linking SSM with data-focused information systems development.
Prior (1990)	Deriving data flow diagrams from SSM conceptual models.

Sawyer (1992)	Using the OPTUM methodology to link SSM and data flow diagrams.
Spear (1987)	Adding more complete analyses of conflict and power.
Wood-Harper (1989), Wood-Harper & Avison (1991, 1992)	Using the Multiview framework to link hard and soft approaches to information systems development.
Woodburn (1985)	Adding the DIME (dependency, information, material, energy) concept to conceptual models.
Yeo (1993)	Linking systems thinking and project management.

In addition, a seminar to discuss Soft Systems Methodology and information systems was held at Warwick University on 25th March 1992. There was considerable debate whether the linkage of SSM and information system development methodologies was desirable, given the soft nature of the former and the hard approach of the latter. Examples of methodologies and projects which achieved such links were discussed and a further research agenda identified. Papers<sup>†</sup> were presented by Mingers, Checkland, Holwell, Stowell and West, Jayratna, Paton, Jones, Fitzgerald, Prior, Wood, Wood-Harper and Avison, Galliers, Ormerod, Lewis, Gregory, Merali, and Sawyer.

In conclusion, the approach in this research has been to provide guidance in the use of the methodology, (while strongly supporting the view of Checkland and Scholes, 1990 that the broader aim is to learn from using the methodology), and to apply this knowledge to future studies, always aiming for deeper insight into how organisational change can be achieved successfully.

### 2.3.5 Uses of SSM

Many writers have sought to communicate SSM concepts by identifying where the methodology has been used (or could beneficially be used), or describing case studies in which they have been involved.

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<sup>†</sup> Published in *Systemist*, 14(3), August 1992.

Examples of the authors and the uses of SSM which they identified are shown below:

Bentley (1993)	Performance management and change management for IT organisations.
Blacket & Checkland (1993)	Improving management of the NHS Contracting Process Phase 1.
Brember (1985)	User survey for library management.
Colins & Chippendale (1992)	Information systems planning, assessment of values and culture.
Davies & Wood-Harper (1989)	Use of Weltanschauung to express socially constructed viewpoints of information systems developers.
Finegan (1992)	Technology transfer.
Galliers et al (1981)	Employment prospects for mentally handicapped people.
Jayaratna (1991)	Information systems analysis.
LeFevre & Pattison (1986)	Planning hospital information systems.
LeSaint-Grant (1991, 1992)	Performance evaluation.
Lyytinen (1988)	Information systems planning.
Mansell (1993)	Identification of the failure of information technology.
McLoughlin (1986)	Management services.
Mingers & Taylor (1992)	Organisational restructures, performance evaluation, information systems work.
O'Connor (1992)	Linking business objectives and information system development.
Smith & Watson (1986)	Modelling an existing RAAF logistics system.
Travis (1991)	Strategic direction and information system planning for small business.
Watson & Smith (1988)	Application of SSM in Australia.

Williamson & Pattison (1992)	Strategic planning within a university.
Wilson (1984)	Information analysis.
Wilson & Morren (1990)	Improvements in agriculture and resource management.

In addition, a number of case studies emanating from the work at Lancaster University have been discussed in the various publications by Checkland, all relating in some way to bringing about improvements within organisations.

Literature of this type is important to communication and shared learning amongst SSM users. It has added to the researcher's understanding and use of SSM over a ten year period for both corporate and information systems planning, and has impacted on the researcher's adaptation of SSM (Appendix 2). It is provided here to indicate to the reader the range of uses of SSM, and to provide a comparison with the researcher's own SSM projects (Appendix 1).

### **2.3.6 Conclusion**

The above SSM literature influenced this research by providing comparisons with the theory and practice of SSM and this researcher's adaptation of the methodology; it highlighted the flexibility, learning, communication, iteration and participation which are key components of SSM and fundamental to the use of the methodology in this action research; and raised the question whether the use SSM is assisted by tools and techniques or by the user reflecting on the learning experience gained in each SSM project. The critical systems theory debate provided a caution as to claims resulting from this research that SSM can contribute to cultural change in organisations.

Questions were also raised whether the facilitator or the methodology is the main contributor in an SSM organisational change project. The role of the facilitator, as well as factors contributing to the successful use of SSM for organisational change



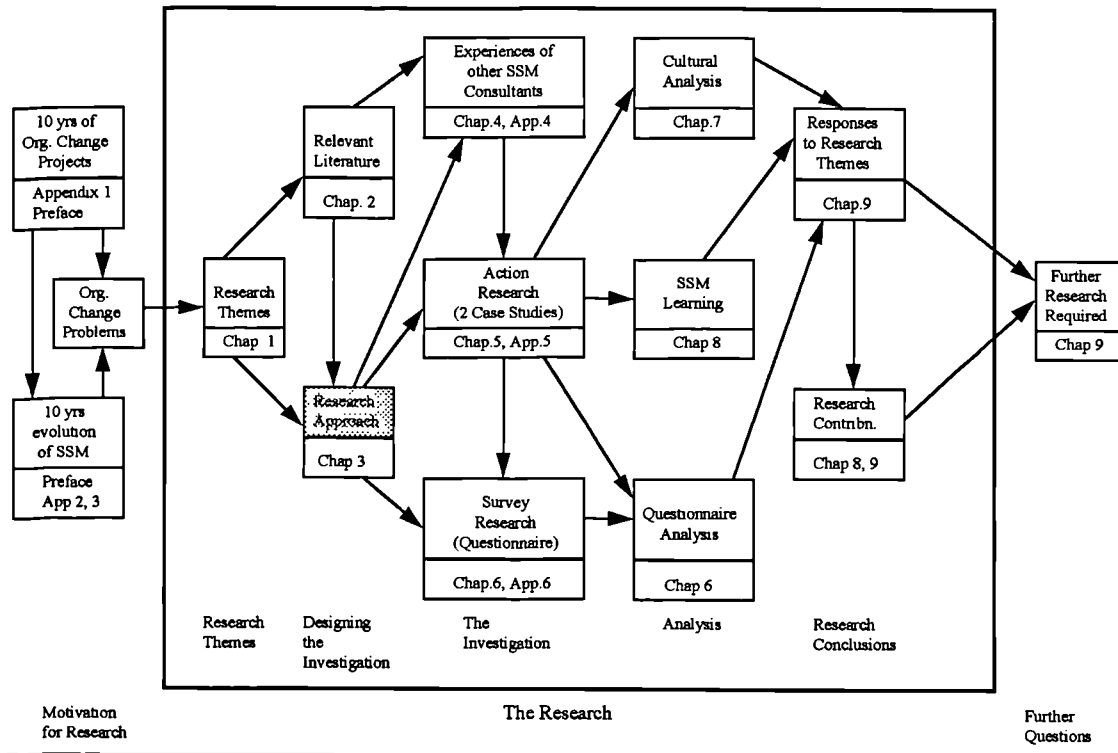
initiatives, are further developed in Chapter 4 - Interviews with other SSM consultants/researchers.

The analysis of literature relevant to the research themes, together with the research methods literature, guided the choices made in the development of the research approach as discussed in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Map of the Structure of the Thesis



### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research themes presented in Chapter 1 posed specific difficulties in research design. It was important to identify, firstly, that members of an SSM project had undergone a change in belief in regard to what are the appropriate cultural values for the organisation (ie the Weltanschauungen); and secondly, that specific aspects of an SSM project contributed significantly to that change.

However, as indicated in the literature (Chapter 2), culture is extremely difficult to identify - it is not a distinct entity with clear attributes, and it is not possible to achieve more than a fragmented, superficial understanding of culture, especially as an outsider (Morgan, 1986, p 139). In addition, while SSM has been considered to be helpful in a number of problem situations, it has been suggested that this cannot be proved (Checkland, 1972 p 29).

To further add to the difficulty, this research took place in individual organisational contexts, and an organisation is itself a complex social system.

### **3.2 RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES**

Based on the above, it was concluded that this research was trying to understand the meaning of social phenomena. This places it in the arena of social science research, introducing yet another complexity that personal interaction in the research had the potential to affect the phenomena, the participants' and the researcher's perceptions. As Checkland (1991, pp 2, 3) emphasises, it would not be possible to precisely define the learning in advance.

Because of these problems it became clear that the four major characteristics of the scientific approach (Flood & Carson 1988, p 270) made this approach inappropriate for this research, ie:

#### **1. Hypothesis testing:**

Checkland (1991, p 4) has emphasised that in this type of SSM research it was not possible to formulate hypotheses, but only to identify research themes or research areas from which lessons could be learnt.

#### **2. Reductionism - the reduction of complexity under experimental conditions:**

It was decided it would be unlikely that a host organisation would be prepared for the researcher to undertake a controlled experiment. Further it is difficult to see how complexity in such social systems could indeed be reduced; nor that this would achieve the necessary analysis related to the research themes being posed - given the acknowledged complexity of social systems in which the topic is placed.

**3. Repeatability - the validation of experimental results by repetition:**

It would not be possible for the research to be repeated, either in the same organisation, or a different organisation, and thus validate the outcomes, because it is not possible to repeat exactly human behaviour, perceptions and understanding.

**4. Refutation - knowledge building by the refutation of hypotheses:**

Since hypotheses were inappropriate (see 1 above), this characteristic also made the scientific approach inappropriate for this research.

As a result it can be concluded that the scientific approach, with precision in definition, quantitative and objective data collection, and replicable findings was not appropriate for this research. Social situations are not concrete, measurable phenomena; organisation realities are the projection of human imagination (Daft, 1983 p 539). Checkland (1991, p 397) had also emphasised from an SSM research perspective that the methods of natural science cannot be applied to social phenomena.

Scientific approaches such as laboratory experiments, field experiments, theorem proof, forecasting and simulation were therefore rejected, but there did appear to be some potential for including case studies and surveys in the research providing these were used from an interpretivist perspective (Galliers, 1992b, p 149).

In contrast, the inter-related schools of thought which do fit the aims and context of this research are:

- **Qualitative:**

Research based on phenomenology, with descriptive, indepth enquiry, personal perspectives and experiences, using words and observations to express reality (Patton, 1990). Qualitative research emphasises the context in which the behaviour takes place and the importance of attempting to see the behaviour

from the position of its originator. This requires direct, firsthand, intimate knowledge of a research setting (Gable, 1994, p 114).

- **Antipositivism:**

Knowledge is soft, more subjective, spiritual, or even transcendental - based on experience, insight, and essentially of a personal nature. This is in contrast to positivism, which is based on beliefs that knowledge is hard, real and tangible (Flood and Carson, 1988 p 269). Further, individuals can only be understood in the context of their social and cultural life (Hirschheim, 1992, p 43).

The concept “antipositivism” is also referred to as “post-positivist philosophy”, based on real world situations (Galliers, 1992b).

- **Phenomenology/Hermeneutics:**

Research based on opinion and speculation rather than observation (Galliers, 1992b, p 152); the “intuitive grasping of the essences” of phenomena, where an essence is what enables something to be defined (Hirschheim, 1992, p 48).

- **Interpretivist:**

Subjective research; the opposite of scientific, i.e. the interpretivist view argues that there are many different interpretations of social phenomena; the investigator will impact on the social system; and there is difficulty in forecasting future events concerned with human activity. Therefore, research should be based on intuitive understanding, rather than empirical testing, of phenomena (Galliers, 1992b pp 148, 158).

### **3.3 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY**

In designing the research approach the philosophy of Daft (1983, pp 540-543) was taken into consideration, i.e.

- **Research as a Craft:**

This viewpoint argues that a research design should not be too rigorous or controlled, removing all uncertainties, as this assumes that the researcher has such extensive knowledge of the phenomena that results can be predicted. If this is so, why ask the question? Rather if the aim of research is to acquire learning which is new (where the answer is not known in advance), then the research design has to allow for surprises.

*The research was designed based on one case study, with the intent of comparing the results with previous SSM projects the researcher had carried out as a consultant. As the case study progressed the opportunity arose for a second case study to run concurrently in the same organisation. It was realised that this was a rich opportunity to learn from the two inter-related experiences and the research design was altered to accommodate the second study.*

*As to the element of surprise, the researcher did not know whether project participants would be able to express a changed Weltanschauung, even if a change had occurred; nor was it known what factors in the SSM project they would have found helpful. To the researcher's knowledge these questions had not been asked before.*

- **Research is Storytelling:**

Collection and analysis of data is important, but the most important aspect of research is telling the story which relentlessly asks what the data means - why the results are so. This is the contribution to knowledge.

*To gain an understanding of the "why" of the research results it was realised it would be necessary to relate behaviour to an analysis of the organisational culture and the context in which the project was carried out, and in this way try to interpret why events occurred.*

- **Design Research as a Poem, Not a Novel:**

Do not try to answer all possible questions about the phenomena. Good research is an imperfect model of organisational reality, but it does raise new questions.

*The broad question of SSM contributing to cultural change in organisations was narrowed to an evaluation of 'if and why' a change in Weltanschauungen occurred. This is a narrower concept because it only directly tests the values relating to organisational purpose. Other value changes relating to beliefs and behaviours in the organisation are not directly tested, although changes are indicated by the analysis generated and action plans agreed as part of the SSM process.*

- **Research Decisions are Not Linear:**

Decisions to carry out the research should involve intuition and emotions. The researcher should really care about the research, and research projects should be characterised by beauty ...”

*The researcher wanted to know what participants understood had happened in an SSM project, and why. The researcher was less interested in the learning experience of the researcher or project sponsor (usually a senior manager). It seems incongruous to the researcher that, as SSM researchers, we espouse the concept of SSM as a learning participative approach and then have not asked for the participant point of view on the learning experience. This has a feeling of paternalism and elitism. The researched cared about the participant viewpoint and this focus brought new insights into the theory and practice of SSM.*

- **Learn About Organisations Firsthand:**

Do not be an armchair theorist. Go out into organisations and experience their richness, and only then will it be possible to develop insightful theories.

*Opinions from other SSM researchers' participants could have been collected, or the researcher could have observed another facilitator go through an SSM project. It was decided that the richest learning experience was to use a real business project and facilitate it directly in the normal commercial role of consultant to the enterprise. It was also believed that the researcher's work in organisations, and especially consultancy work over the last 6 years, has given the researcher a rich understanding of organisational life, which inevitably will underpin interpretation of the case studies.*

*The advice of Davies and Ledington (1991, p 14) not to over-rationalise the use of SSM was also heeded.*

### **3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH**

Within the above parameters the following decisions were made about the research approach:

- **Longitudinal Research:**

The aim was to learn how to improve the carrying out of an SSM project in order to increase the contribution of such projects to cultural change. It was decided that the boundary of the research would be the SSM project. This was a difficult decision as it could be argued that unless the after effects were monitored (ie the implementation of the project) it would not be possible to identify whether cultural change had been achieved. It was decided not to monitor implementation because it would extend the size and complexity of the research beyond what appeared achievable in a single person research project. Also, it was likely that including implementation would "muddy the waters" in terms of the basic question of the SSM process, since so many other social and environmental factors would impact on the implementation process. Therefore longitudinal research was rejected.



With hindsight this was a fortuitous decision as the case study organisation, the Crown Law Department, was amalgamated with other government agencies and, within weeks of the research concluding, ceased to exist as an entity able to implement directly the result of the SSM process. However, the researcher's continued consultancy involvement with the new organisation, the Ministry of Justice, has enabled some investigation of the implementation of the outcomes of the case studies to be carried out, and it has been apparent that many of the recommendations of the case study projects have been implemented in the new organisation.

- **Case Study Approach:**

It was decided that the case study approach, if appropriately applied, should provide the framework to learn in detail about a single event (the SSM process) in an organisation. This also appeared to be manageable in terms of this research project. However, the strengths and limitations of the case study approach were acknowledged, ie High discoverability (explorability) and representability (potential model complexity), but low controllability, deductibility, repeatability and generalisability (Gable, 1994 p 114).

Given that interpretation of results would be case study specific, this led to concern about any generalisations which could be reached about the learning experience. Therefore it was decided to carry out more than one case study, although the number would be restricted because of the limitations of what could be achieved in a single person research project. In any case there would again be difficulties in reaching generalised conclusions from a small number of case studies, although patterns might begin to emerge. In the end two case studies were carried out concurrently in one organisation (although the second study started slightly later). This was an improvement on the analysis of a single case study, but perhaps not significantly.

- **Action Research:**

A further concern was that the researcher would be facilitating the SSM process and would have an impact on people and events. To acknowledge that this impact would occur, but that the outcomes may not be able to fully detected, it was decided that the research approach would be action research.

Eden and Huxham (1995, p 1) describe action research as:

Research which, broadly, results from an involvement by the researcher with members of an organisation over a matter which is of genuine concern to them and in which there is an intent by the organisation members to take action based on the intervention.

Action research is based in phenomenology rather than positivism (Susman and Evered, 1978). It is characterised by acknowledgement that the researcher affects the situation researched; the researcher's deliberate and active association with the research's practical outcomes as well as the search for theoretical outcomes; recognition that the roles of subject and researcher can be reversed (Galliers, 1992b, p 157); and is based on the principle that the researcher plays the role of partner in the process of change (Wood-Harper, 1985 p178). Checkland (1991) adds that action research involves a collaborative process between researcher and participants, critical enquiry, and reflective learning. Further, "a representation of reality is not so much desired, but rather a means for dealing with reality. Action research is a pragmatic approach which desired to 'come to terms' with the world" (Wood-Harper, 1989 p 130). These characteristics compare well with the requirements of this research.

Action research was also appealing because it is the tradition within which SSM has evolved, ie the learning about methodology which occurred during client sponsored studies (Checkland 1972), and the concept of theory tested in practice, and practice as the source of theory (Checkland and Scholes 1990). This style of action research is referred to by Eden and Huxham (1995, p3) as 'action learning'. By using action learning for this research it was considered that some risks in the

research design had been reduced by the prior testing of this approach in the SSM environment.

Baskerville and Wood-Harper (1992, pp 8-10) describe the problems in using action research, emphasising that these are the same problems as experienced with all research in social sciences, for example:

- **The lack of impartiality of the researcher.**

It is emphasised that this problem is not unique to Action Research.

- **Tendency for action research to lack discipline.**

The need is for *rigorous*, rather than *liberal* action research. Rigorous action research is characterised by a disciplined approach to establishing an ethical client infrastructure and research environment, planning the collection of data, and the iterative phases of formulating theory, planning action, taking action, and evaluating action.

- **Consulting masquerading as research**

Factors differentiating research from consulting include the research requirement for more rigorous documentary records; research focussing on theoretical, rather than empirical, justifications; and the cyclical process of action research in contrast to the linear approach of consulting.

- **Action research is context-bound, not context-free**

Each situation is unique and cannot be repeated, and it is difficult to know whether causal factors relate to the environment, researcher or methodology. However, these difficulties can be minimised by further testing and triangulation.

A further weakness of action research is that it places an onerous responsibility on the researcher to act ethically and not align with particular sub groups. This problem was recognised in this research. However, it is the same responsibility which the consultant faces with every consultancy project undertaken in a commercial, business capacity, and it was hoped that the researcher had the experience to recognise and manage these issues (Galliers, 1992b p 158).

As Checkland explains, there are other difficulties with action research. It is impossible to write down the full richness of a study; impossible to know how the set of happenings which constituted the study were interpreted by each participant based on their own values; and impossible to defend the written account against comments that there was a better way of carrying out the study - "Such comments are not very interesting, since they are in principle incapable of refutation, but they do illustrate what a tender flower a related case history is" (Checkland, 1985b p 821).

It was therefore decided to acknowledge openly the subjectivity in interpreting the events which occurred in the action research by providing a personalised account of the case studies as a participant observer ( See Appendix 5). This approach follows the example of Davies and Ledington (1991, p 14) in separating the "rhetoric of methodology from the reflection on the action". It was also considered that this approach was appropriate, since if it is accepted that SSM is based on interpretive theory, then the researcher's understanding of the case studies would inevitably involve "trying to subjectively understand the point of view and the intentions of the human beings who construct social systems" (Jackson, 1985 p 142). Myers (1994, p 765) also argues for the use of the first person in reporting qualitative research, stating:

I believe that the narrative format contributes to the vividness, the memorable quality and the face validity of the best qualitative research. Also, the use of "I" and the active voice recognises the fact that the researcher is situated in history and was an integral part of the study itself.

Finally, the precedent for first person reporting in action research was established by Collier (1945) in investigating ethnic relations with American Indians.

Eden and Huxham (1995) are also concerned with the rigour and relevance of action research and provide a set of standards which, they suggest, should be met for action research to be considered research, although they recognise this is hard to achieve since "action research is an imprecise, uncertain, and sometimes

unstable activity compared to many other approaches to research”. The standards include that action research must:

- Be concerned with intervening in action.
- Have implications beyond the domain of the project.
- Be useable in everyday life and involve elaboration and development of theory.
- Any tools, techniques, models or methods used to generalise the outcomes must be related to the theories which underpin the action research.

### **3.4.1 Action Research: Decision Steps**

Checkland (1991, pp 400, 401) emphasises that with action research the intellectual framework, in terms of which learning will be defined, must be declared in advance. Specifically any research will involve a particular set of linked ideas, used in a methodology, to enquire about some area of investigation. In action research this results in a series of decision steps, which are shown below and linked to the decisions for this research:

- **Select a real-world situation potentially relevant to the research themes:**

Firstly, it was decided that the case study should be a “real-world” situation. For the researcher this meant a real business study, rather than a contrived project for research purposes, or even that the sponsors and participants in the business study knew it would be used for PhD research.

It is considered by the researcher that the potential weakness with the majority of SSM literature is that the case studies were often declared to be research projects in advance. This raises significant questions - What type of projects do sponsoring organisations allow students or researchers to undertake? Are they really representative of normal business projects? How is the behaviour of the sponsor and participants affected by knowing the project will be written up

as publicly available research? How has this affected the SSM learning experience and the evolution of the methodology?

A further concern was raised in the interview with Scholes (see Appendix 4) when he stated “Lancaster students’ SSM projects are inevitably influenced by what constitutes a decent dissertation”.

Therefore it was decided to find a host organisation where there could be some confidence that they would agree to the use of the project(s) as PhD research, even though permission was asked after the project was completed, ie there would need to be trust, respect and cooperation between the client and consultant.

It is recognised that not declaring the research intention in advance may be regarded as unethical. For example, Baskerville and Wood-Harper (1992, p 11) state, “The ethics of human subjects research discourage research without the ‘informed consent’ of the subject. This implies that conducting action research under the guise of consulting would be unethical”. However, as stated above, lack of knowledge of the research intent by the sponsor and participants was critical to investigating whether the researcher’s adaptation of SSM, and facilitated/participative approach, would achieve change in Weltanschauungen, from the participants’ perspective - as part of a normal business consultancy project. Not declaring the research intent was also important to the aim of asking the participants to identify what other factors had contributed to any change in Weltanschauungen. In an attempt to overcome the ethical dilemma the researcher and sponsor (together with other senior managers) reached agreement on the objectives, methodology, and respective roles for the projects, and these were formally documented and circulated to all participants before the consultancies began. In addition, should the sponsor have not agreed to the use of the projects for this research, then, obviously, the researcher would not have used the work. Rather, the sponsor (and other participants) were extremely willing to give their consent,

and the sponsor was most enthusiastic in reviewing the thesis and providing feedback.

In planning the research it was also important to find a project scope which would be broad enough to investigate the research themes. This probably excluded one day SSM workshops, or projects where the consultant did not have freedom to design the process to fit within the SSM approach. It was also desirable to find a project where the impacts of leadership and participation could be evaluated, as well as the methodology itself.

The project to review the role, activities and organisational structure of the Corporate Services division of the Crown Law Department arrived unexpectedly, but met all the above criteria. It was therefore chosen as Case Study 1. Later, when the same project sponsor asked the researcher to carry out a second study of Crown Law Department Library Services, with the same objectives, using the same approach as Case Study 1, and even some of the same participants, it was realised that there was a golden opportunity for a rich comparison of two case studies operating concurrently in one organisation, and this became Case Study 2.

It was considered that these case studies were suitable as the basis for research to try to identify whether a change in Weltanschauungen occurred, and how the SSM project contributed to this change. It was recognised that there was a limitation on the scope of the case studies, since the objectives were to review the role, activities and organisational structure of Corporate Services and Library Services, and not whether Corporate Services or Libraries should continue to exist within CLD. (This is further explained in Appendix 5, The Case Studies.) However, it was not considered that this limitation would seriously impact the research as it was a limitation often implied with similar business consultancies.

Further, it was expected that the research would be broadly within the context of dedication to human emancipation, using Jackson's (1991b, p 141) definition of seeking "to achieve for all individuals the maximum development of their potential", as the researcher knew this was a stated philosophy of the Human Resources Branch of Corporate Services and that this was likely to be reinforced during the project. This view was taken despite Jackson's argument that a weakness of SSM is its inability to address emancipation. However, it was acknowledged that as a typical business project it was unlikely that this emancipation would take the form of revolutionary outcomes which would significantly change the balance of power within society.

It is also acknowledged that the researcher's behaviour in the case studies may have altered because of the knowledge that the case studies were probably going to become part of PhD research. Nevertheless, throughout the case studies the researcher's primary focus was the business project's success. The researcher's "usual" SSM approach was altered on only two occasions in order to gather research data - firstly, in the structure of the pre-workshop interview questions, and secondly, by administering a post-project questionnaire. Although detailed diary notes were kept by the researcher, this was not evident to the participants during the case studies.

- **Negotiate the roles of the researcher and the people in the problem situation:**

The researcher's role was specifically defined as "facilitator".

The roles of all people involved in each of the case study projects was debated, decided, and documented as part of the formal project plan document. These roles were fully discussed and confirmed with all parties involved. For the Working Party members (who participated in the SSM workshops) the implications of their role, how they would carry it out, and the skills they



would need were discussed in the individual pre-workshop interviews and in the workshops.

- **Declare the framework of ideas and the methodology in which they are embodied:**

The declaration is as follows:

The research centres on carrying out an SSM process as a legitimate business project, in order to learn more about how SSM can contribute to the achievement of cultural change in organisations.

To do this the focus will be on perceived changes in Weltanschauungen, as expressed by the facilitator, sponsor and project participants. What aspects of the project the sponsor and participants believe contributed to any changes in Weltanschauungen which occurred will also be identified.

The methodology to carry out the research will be action learning, incorporating interviews, questionnaires, observation, analysis of formal project documentation (the project plan plus the outcomes of each SSM phase as documented in workshops on an electronic whiteboard), and review and feedback on the thesis by the project sponsor.

Therefore a methodology (action learning) is being used to understand more about a particular learning process (SSM), from the perspective of achieving cultural change, in order to improve the success of the future use of SSM by the researcher and others.

Because there is an existing body of knowledge about action learning, cultural change and SSM, but, to the researcher's knowledge, these research themes

have not been posed before, the research is in the category of testing and extending theory, rather than building theory.

- **Become involved in the situation to bring about improvements; and at the same time accumulate experience about the framework of ideas and methodology:**

The role of facilitator was carried out with the primary business objective of improving the problem situation. In doing so learning occurred about cultural change, SSM and action research.

- **Review the experience in terms of lessons.**

The case study nature of the research made it important to look for ways to generalise the learning experience, otherwise the learning would only be applicable to further projects in the Crown Law Department (CLD).

Behaviour in a particular organisation can be explained in terms of the organisation's culture (and sub cultures). Therefore in order to generalise the learning experience it was necessary to carry out a cultural analysis.

In addition, the cultural change perspective of the research could only be understood and generalised if the degree to which the culture of the case study organisations was receptive to change was also analysed.

Further, behaviour in an SSM project depends on the project's context, the facilitator and the participants. It was therefore important to explain and analyse these factors in the interpretation of findings.

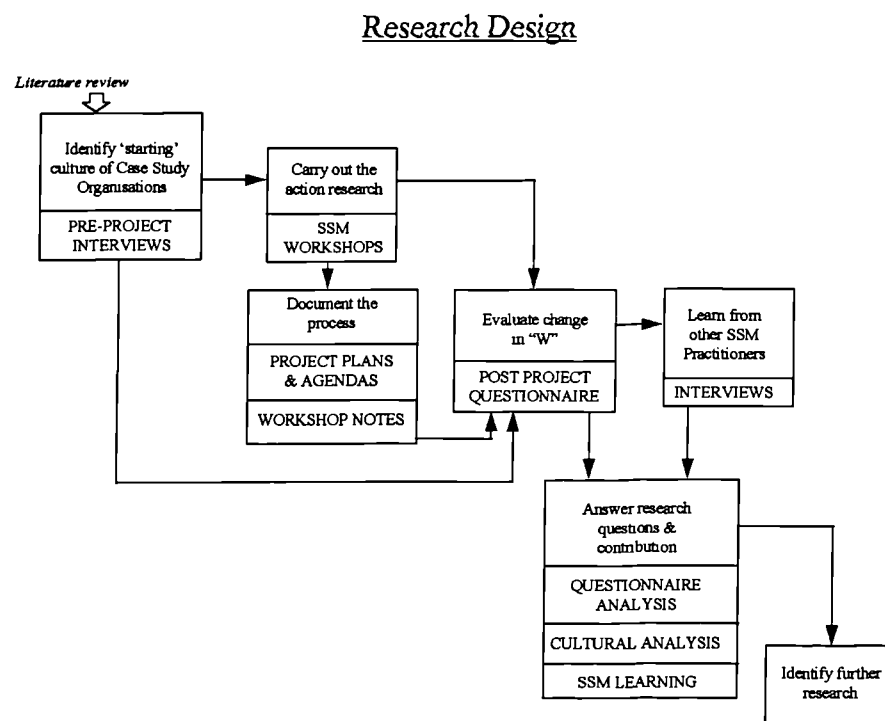
It would then be possible to say that organisations in similar situations to CLD, with SSM projects which have these characteristics, may have the same outcomes. From this, rather tentative conclusion, it would be necessary to identify the learning experience and the contribution made in building on

existing theory. Arriving at these conclusions would raise a number of questions which could usefully form the basis of further research.

### 3.4.2 Research Design

Based on the above framework, the following research design, as shown in the following map, was decided upon:

Figure 2:



- **Identify existing research of relevance to the topic**

This involved evaluating literature on the topics of research methods, SSM, culture and cultural change.

- **Gain an appreciation of the culture of the parts of the organisation involved in the case studies, and especially of the direct project participants (ie the Working Parties), at the time the case studies are initiated.**

For Case Study 1 it was decided to add to the researcher's general observation and existing knowledge of Corporate Services (from previous consultancy work) by carrying out interviews with Working Party members. Interviews were chosen because they were an established step used by the researcher, and believed to be critical before workshops begin, and there was the opportunity to expand the usual more general questions asked to include questions aimed at more specifically evaluating culture. It was considered that adding these questions would enhance, rather than detract from, the aims of the interviews. The researcher had only previously worked with two of the participants, the sponsor, Glen Coffey, and the IT Manager, Les Cooper, and therefore it was judged that previous relationships would not affect the overall interview responses.

The specific questions asked are discussed in Appendix 5.

The advantage of structured interviews, rather than a survey by questionnaire, was the greater richness of response which could be engendered by building rapport between facilitator and interviewee, as well as probing for further information, as required.

The interviews were necessarily confidential, and depended on the researcher's interpretation and note taking, causing a potential weakness from a research perspective. However, the themes identified were summarised and reviewed with the management team. Further potential weaknesses relate to whether the questions were asked in a way which affected the response, and whether the questions were answered completely and honestly. To offset these weaknesses

is the researcher's extensive experience in these interview processes, gained over ten years' experience in similar consultancy projects.

For Case Study 2 it was decided, for business sensitivity (rather than research) reasons, not to ask the structured questions, although interviews did occur and general discussion took place. Therefore there was less structured data on which to base the cultural analysis (as discussed in Chapter 7). The business sensitivities relate to the history, conflict and politics surrounding the instigation of the project, and the desire to overcome these as much as possible and build rapport. In this context it was not considered appropriate to ask the structured questions. However, the history, conflict and politics themselves provided a rich substitute as a means of arriving at an understanding of the culture. (For more details on these issues see Chapter 5 and Appendix 5, Case Study 2.)

Analysis of the data resulting from these interviews assists the investigation of changes in Weltanschauungen (Chapter 5 - The Case Studies, Chapter 6 - Analysis of Case Study Questionnaires) and the cultural analysis of the case study organisations in Chapter 7.

- **Carry out the action research.**

This involved taking an action research perspective on the case studies, as a researcher participating, observing, analysing and learning from the process. It has all the advantages and problems of action research as described above.

- **Document the SSM process.**

It was decided to use primary documents. All steps of the SSM process were carried out in workshops attended by the project sponsor and other participants. Every aspect of the analysis was recorded on an electronic whiteboard. Copies were printed and distributed to all workshop participants

throughout each workshop. These documents are the primary evidence of the process followed. Their weakness is that they were inevitably in cryptic form and some richness of meaning may have been lost.

Other documentary evidence was provided by the formal project documents - the project plan and workshop agendas.

- **Gather data to evaluate whether change of Weltanschauungen had occurred, and if so what factors had contributed.**

Firstly, the whiteboard prints produced during the workshops recorded the group's decisions on Weltanschauungen. Secondly, observation and reflection on the part of the researcher indicated what factors seemed to have contributed to change in Weltanschauungen. However, the research also required data direct from the participants, rather than the researcher's or the sponsor's view of what the participants thought.

Carrying out another series of one-to-one interviews similar to the pre-workshop interviews was rejected because the researcher would have become such a part of the problem situation that participants would have an interpretation of what the researcher's views were, and what answers the researcher was seeking. In a one-on-one situation they might either say what they believed the researcher wanted to know, or the reverse, depending on how they viewed their relationship with the researcher.

Therefore it was decided that an anonymous way of gathering the data was needed and a questionnaire was decided upon. For Case Study 1, the aim was to achieved a 100% response rate by handing out the questionnaire and asking for it to be completed in a Working Party meeting. This was achieved, although not all participants answered all questions, or added comments. For

Case Study 2 a 100% response rate was also achieved , but the questionnaire was completed in the respondents' own time.

In using the questionnaire the focus was not statistical analysis of the responses but an attempt to discover, "The majority thinks x". However, the richness which might be revealed by any comments made was *important, and was a way* of overcoming some of the weaknesses of survey research. Comments were invited on every question but there was no way of ensuring comments were made, and some respondents did not add comments.

The weaknesses of using a questionnaire, and especially completed at a meeting (ie no time to reflect and revisit) were that it was a snapshot in time and the answers might depend on the *individual's mood, or external factors impacting* on the project (eg the looming State Government election was causing concern about the future of CLD, and perhaps the value of the case study projects). In addition, despite the anonymity the answers may not have been honest or complete. Further, the answers and comments, when negative, could have been politically motivated, eg to show dissatisfaction with management stemming from some cause other than the case study, or as a resistance to the organisational change which was implied by the outcomes of the SSM process.

Added to this were all the usual problems of questionnaire design - the way the questions are phrased or ordered may instigate a particular reply, the questions may be misunderstood, the comments will inevitably be very brief, the respondents may not be able to recall the information required (Bradburn et al, 1987 p 157).

Including structured interviews and questionnaires in the research design was to some extent mixing approaches to data collection and analysis - quantitative and qualitative - surveys and field observation. However, the value of this mixing in order to improve confidence in results has been identified by Jick (1979) in discussing the concept of triangulation, Gable (1994) in specifically

identifying the benefits of combining case studies and survey results, and Baskerville and Wood-Harper (1992) in discussing rigour in action research. In addition, the survey results should help to reduce the risk of improper interpretation of the qualitative research (Kerlinger, 1986 p 348).

- **Learn from the experiences of other SSM practitioners.**

It was considered important to broaden the context of the learning via the case studies by adding the experiences of other users of SSM. This could have been achieved entirely via the literature. However, although literature research was carried out, a richer debate than occurs in the published literature was sought. Therefore it was decided to seek direct contact with SSM practitioners.

A questionnaire could have been used to survey a wide number of practitioners. This approach was rejected because, as mentioned, the researcher was looking to be personally involved in a rich debate, and this could not be achieved via questionnaire.

Therefore the choice was structured interviews - structured to allow comparison of results across interviews - but sufficiently flexible to enable the greatest richness and learning to be achieved.

The weakness in this approach was that it restricted the researcher to a smaller number of respondents because of time constraints within the scope of the research project. Therefore it was decided that quality of interview was critical.

To achieve this the decision was made to carry out the interviews in the UK. This was for two reasons. Firstly, it was considered that the most deep and critical debate on SSM had occurred in the UK, the home of the methodology. Secondly, it was recognised that at least some of the respondents would be carrying out SSM based business consultancy as their prime method of income



generation. To them the researcher would be a competitor. It was less likely that this factor would limit the information provided if the interviewee's business environment was not Australia - ie no direct competition.

Mingers, who had recently carried out a survey on the use of SSM in the UK, was contacted and provided names. The researcher then corresponded with the interviewees and all agreed to an interview.

The interviews were documented and returned to the interviewees for verification.

- **Synthesise all the data and experiences gathered to identify learning.**

The iterative steps involved were:

- Analysis of the questionnaires from both case studies to identify from the perspective of the participants and sponsor whether a change in Weltanschauungen had occurred, and, if so, what factors had contributed.
- Cultural analysis of the case studies from the perspectives of:
  - Culture at the start of the project, using Davies & Ledington's (1991) attributes.
  - Degree of receptiveness to cultural change, using Pettigrew's (1992) criteria.
  - Cultural change which occurred in the SSM process, using the post project questionnaires, and documentation of the SSM process as it occurred in the workshops.
- SSM learning and contribution from the perspective of:
  - Mode 1 versus Mode 2 use of SSM (Checkland & Scholes 1990).

- The approach to using SSM in terms of the Cultural Stream of Analysis and the Logic-Based Stream of Analysis.  
(Checkland & Scholes 1990)
- Analysis related to the research themes, applying all the information and knowledge accrued throughout the action research to determine whether:
  1. Participants in an SSM project may achieve changes in Weltanschauungen, and such shifts can be identified.
  2. Not all participants in an SSM project will have the same pre-project Weltanschauung, or the same changed Weltanschauung at the conclusion of the project. However, sufficient similarity of change will occur in a number of the participants to indicate cultural change has occurred (ie a group sharing of new values).
  3. Specific factors relating to how an SSM project was carried out can be identified as significant to the changes in Weltanschauungen which occurred.
- Identification of the contribution to the extension of the theory relating to the use SSM, and especially for organisational change projects.
- Identification of further research projects, based on questions raised in this research.

### **3.5 CONCLUSIONS**

It was concluded that for this research the most appropriate perspectives are qualitative, antipositivist and interpretivist, based on phenomenology/hermeneutics.

Case studies were selected rather than a longitudinal approach and the Checkland (1991) guidelines for action research were considered useful, and especially since this

is the traditional approach to SSM research. Structured interviews and a survey would be included, introducing a duality of approach and perhaps strengthening the outcomes (Jick 1979).

However, the problems of action research, as discussed, are acknowledged, and will be further considered in the interpretation of the research findings.

Chapter 4 , which follows, describes the interviews with SSM consultants in the UK. These interviews highlight a number of critical considerations in carrying out the research and interpreting the results.

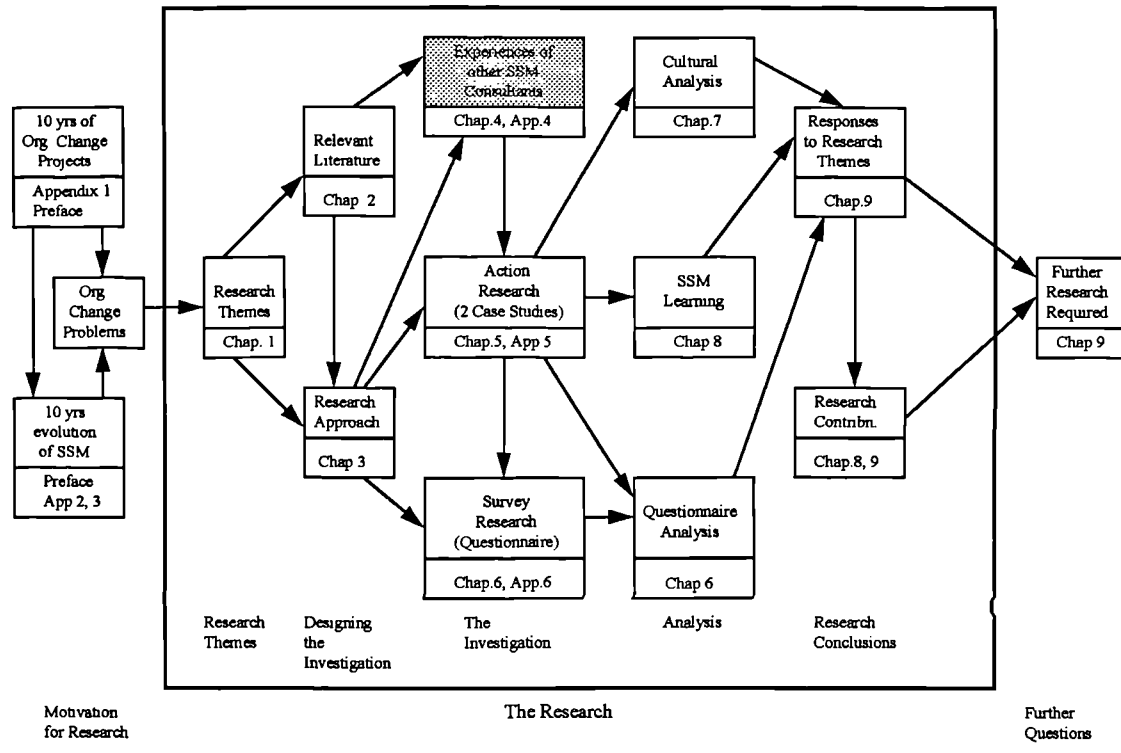
Chapter 5 summarises how the action research approach was applied to two case studies. Full documentation of the case studies appears in Appendix 5.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS WITH

### OTHER SSM CONSULTANTS

Map of the Structure of the Thesis



#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Five interviews with Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) consultants/researchers were conducted in the UK. The aim of the interviews was to add to the understanding resulting from the analysis of the literature and to gain a wider perspective on the research themes and the researcher's use of SSM.

The five consultants/researchers were selected by reviewing the literature and speaking with UK academics to identify people whose experience would assist my research.

The people chosen were:

- Dr Chris Atkinson, University of Manchester
- Professor Peter Checkland, Lancaster University

- Elaine Cole, Management Consultant
- Mike Haynes, Management Consultant
- Dr Jim Scholes, Management Consultant

The interviews were based around three questions:

- In projects where a change in Weltanschauungen occurs, what factors contribute to that change?
- What is the role of the facilitator?
- In what manner is SSM applied?

This second question was introduced because of the researcher's experience in frequently being asked to carry out projects as a result of perceived facilitation skills. This raises the concern as to what extent projects might be considered successful because of the facilitator, rather than because of the methodology, and how might this impact on the research findings?

All interviewees gave generously of their time and interviews ranged between 3 hours and a full day. All debated the questions indepth and willingly gave "inside" information on their projects and adaptation of SSM.

The full documentation of the interviews, reviewed by the interviewees, is presented in Appendix 4. The implications of the interviews for this research are outlined below in terms of:

- Factors contributing to successful organisational change
- Role of the facilitator
- Application of SSM

Comments are added in italics to indicate relevance to this research, and, where appropriate, to highlight bias of the researcher.

## 4.2 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESSFUL ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

### 4.2.1 Atkinson

Atkinson likened an organisational change project to group therapy, where individuals subjugate themselves to the group, but are then reborn. Taking the example of family therapy, Atkinson suggested that in an organisational change project it is often beneficial to introduce metaphors of extreme dissonance to reveal to the participants the inconsistencies of their behaviour.

Atkinson emphasised that in such projects it is important to take into account the range of motivations, from rational to emotional, and the impact of peer pressure in the group. Interpersonal and individual issues are important.

Atkinson added that the process of evaluation is one important way by which an organisation develops.

*The family therapy example has applicability to Case Study 2, the Review of Library Services. Dissonance did occur, but not at my instigation (nor is it my style to deliberately stimulate conflict) . I believe the dissonance did reveal to the participants the inconsistencies of their behaviour and changes occurred from that point. On the part of the librarians, there were eventually elements of individuals subjugating themselves to the group and being reborn (although I doubt whether the participants would relate to this view).*

### 4.2.2 Checkland

Checkland used examples from healthcare projects to illustrate how changes in thinking occur:

- a) In project 1, Checkland highlighted that questioning the C of CATWOE\* caused a realisation that the purchaser, not the patient, is the customer, and this crystallised thinking.
- b) In project 2, Checkland believed that a change in Weltanschauungen occurred based on an acceptance at Director and Manager level of a different conceptualisation, i.e.

From the 4 processes: Needs, Ill health, Health promotion,  
Management improvement

To the processes: Strategy, Commissioning, Monitoring Output,  
Outcomes.

The crucial point was the acceptance at Director and Manager level of this conceptualisation. Checkland added, “They now talk this language”.

- c) In project 3 organisational change occurred at a meeting where the facilitators were not present. This meeting between GPs and hospital consultants was a settling of old scores (“blood on the walls”), and resulted in radical change in the thinking of the consultants.

*In identifying the catalysts for organisational change it is significant that Checkland has highlighted how in different projects the debate of Customer (as part of CATWOE), and the development of conceptual models were critical to the process of organisational change, while in another project the critical incident was a fiery meeting between stakeholders (ie not an SSM phase). My view, based on ten years' of SSM projects has been that the CATWOE and models are the most critical components in achieving cultural change. This was not confirmed in the post-project questionnaire responses as part of this action research.*

In addition, using the a health information systems project as the example, Checkland suggested that the characteristics of organisations which embrace change appear to be:

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\* CATWOE: “A mnemonic of the six crucial characteristics which should be included in a well-formed root definition” Checkland, 1981 p312. The “C” stands for customer.

1. Money available from outside to do the project.
2. The desire to use SSM.
3. The personal agenda of the sponsor, ie the need to be seen to take initiatives.
4. Endorsement of the project by the Chief Executive, eg a pep talk to initiate the project; ensuring that the key people become involved. (CEO support is important IF he is highly respected in the organisation.)
5. The consultant relentlessly driving the process and ensuring deadlines are met. (People in the working groups then know the project will have a finite end.)
6. Making projects fun.

*Items 3, 4, 5 and 6 were characteristics of the case study projects in this research.*

#### **4.2.3 Cole**

Cole used the example of a project with a media products group to highlight her understanding of how organisational change had occurred:

At the end of the first day there was a low ebb. Most participants were not understanding where the models were leading. Over dinner there was debate on high level issues. Overnight Cole developed a model based on these issues. This was the turning point in the project - 'switched the light on'.

The change in W was that the group initially thought of themselves as a flow system - a mechanistic view. They changed to see themselves as creatively deciding what the products will be.

*Cole's belief that a conceptual model was the turning point is important to this research . As stated above, this had been my belief, too, but in the case studies this was not the participants' view (although I am not suggesting that this would necessarily be true for Cole's participants.)*

Cole also discussed characteristics of organisations which successfully achieve organisational change. Her view is that it depends on the people - the quality of the thinking and the positions they are in. In addition, she stated that a learning



organisation is one which has the potential to successfully implement change because it has the capacity to evaluate what is being achieved in organisational change terms.

#### 4.2.4 Haynes

Haynes suggested that a combination of factors is involved in successful organisational change. Interpersonal skills of the facilitator and the methodology (SSM) are both critical, but communication is all.

Haynes added that the facilitator's style is critically important, ie:

- Openness - The ability to get people to be open by being open.
- Getting people to tell stories (and knowing when to close the notebook).
- Empathy with the needs of the people with whom you work.
- Using challenges at the right time - knowing when to be blunt. Being streetwise.

Haynes illustrated the last point by explaining that on one project he and Checkland had used a slide, "the bad news", to convey anonymous statements of concern about the organisation. This had a dramatic impact. It opened up a debate and territory which the participants had been avoiding. It was a watershed. However, for Haynes challenging people to the point of making them uncomfortable is rare.

He believes that change in thinking may occur via a soft approach, eg via models, or by a blunt approach, or change may occur over a period of time, achieving a gradual shift in values. For some clients being holistic is key to the change process, for some it is exploring different viewpoints (Weltanschauungen), and for others, the models.

*Again the interview with Haynes had highlighted the facilitator's emphasis on models as instruments of changed thinking, and on the facilitator's style. I interpreted that, like myself, Haynes and Cole are uncomfortable with confrontational styles in workshops and would use them extremely rarely, if ever, in contrast to Atkinson and Scholes (see below).*

#### 4.2.5 Scholes

Scholes stated that he believes that organisations which do try to change are self selecting. He described such a project and the process used to achieve organisational change.

The process involved the top 150 managers of the company being organised into five waves (with about thirty people in each). However the 150 involved linked back to a wider group, so that in all 1500 people were involved.

Each wave concentrated on a different issue, ie

Wave 1:

Major discontinuities which will face the industry over the next 10 years.

Waves 2 & 3:

Core competencies based on discontinuities.

Wave 4:

White space opportunities (between the current Strategic Business Units).

Wave 5:

What do we have to change? Paradigms preventing us from making change.

Each wave depended on the other, and outcomes were synthesised back to the executive.

Within each wave the first step was a one week workshop where the participants were taken out of their day-to-day experience - "stress them out". They were asked to identify the big issues, (ie which few things would really undermine our ability to do business) and then the actual facts (hard data, pre-prepared) were used to push the boundaries of thinking. The participants were in an unusual situation and under pressure. They were made to realise the inappropriateness of some responses and behaviour; made to over-react and then understand which type of behaviour is unacceptable.

All sessions were harsh (not neutral); the facilitator versus them - set them up and then feed in the real information. This resulted in the consultants getting "beaten up", and the participants complaining that they were not given enough time.

The consultant was in fact doing his best to keep them honest - make them face the facts. It is critical that the existing frame of thinking is challenged

Scholes added that any project can be mapped (like a mood thermometer), where each stage indicates the phases people go through, what people learn, what behaviour will be seen. At the low point in a project (the dip in the mood thermometer), typically a person explodes. At the same time people gather around the new cause, and the peer group deals with the person (who then does not lose face). Typically the person joins the new cause, but alternatively may “leave” the project or the organisation.

Scholes believes that in organisational change projects the percentages are important, ie. the number of people on-side. If there are one-third who believe, that is enough. Typically one-third will sit on the fence but eventually join in to some degree. One-third never will. It is important to know who are the believers, and who will never join in.

Scholes concluded that organisational change is not painless.

*Scholes introduced some thought provoking perspectives on SSM projects:*

- *The harsh style which is used occasionally is different to my approach.*
- *The use of participants linked to wider groups in the organisation is similar to the technique used in Case Study 1.*
- *The argument that some participants never join in with the new vision helps to explain the negativity of a small number of Working Party members at the conclusion of Case Study 1, as shown by the questionnaire responses (Appendix 6).*
- *The concept of organisations which do try to change being self selecting is critical to understanding successful organisational change.*

*There is a contrast between Checkland's comment that projects should be fun, and Scholes' emphasis that organisational change is not painless. My interpretation is that both occurs within a successful organisational change project.*

#### **4.2.6 Conclusions**

The interviews have led to the following items of particular significance to this research:

- From the SSM practitioner's perspective, CATWOE and models are often instrumental in achieving changed Weltanschauungen.
- Atkinson's family therapy example helps to explain behaviour which occurs in workshops, and the need on some occasions to introduce dissonance.
- Organisations which have the capacity to change are probably self selecting and have a learning focus, with self evaluation being key to becoming a learning organisation.
- Full consensus will never be reached and as many as one-third of participants may never espouse the new direction.

### **4.3 ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR**

#### **4.3.1 Atkinson**

Atkinson, in taking the role of consultant or facilitator views himself as the person who does the structured thinking behind a project.

Atkinson explained that the role of consultant is often that of using counselling skills in a therapeutic process (eg pre-workshop interviews). He added that the power of the facilitator is the power of the therapist - but this in itself is a problem, and a more neutral, equitable stance would be preferable. However, using the example of a health information systems project with which he was involved, Atkinson emphasised that the facilitator cannot be an objective observer - political levers are pulled and inevitably there is some element of manipulation by the facilitator.

Also in the healthcare project, because the Weltanschauungen of administrators and clinicians are fundamentally different, Atkinson emphasised that the role of the interventionist was to mediate between these groups before moving into the development of organisational change strategies.

Atkinson added that the facilitator's ability to communicate effectively and help people is important. He uses both empathy and rationalistic approaches within projects. The relationship between the facilitator and the client group is critical to project success.

*Atkinson's description of the facilitator as therapist, using counselling skills, is appropriate to my style. I try not to be biased, but this therapist role does mean that from some perspectives I am not an objective observer. For example:*

- *In the case studies for this research I counselled workshop participants towards being accountable for a value added, and inevitably more strategic, outcome.*
- *I push groups towards resolving conflict and achieving harmony, whereas I could take the opposite stance and maintain conflict as a healthy characteristic within a group*
- *I tend towards a devolved model of responsibility in organisations.*
- *I believe in strategic planning as an important process underpinning how organisations decide to operate.*

*Where these views accord with those of senior management, it could be seen that "political levers are pulled".*

#### **4.3.2 Checkland**

Checkland referred to Chris Atkinson's analysis (Atkinson 1986, p 27) which concluded that methodology is not technique; the use of SSM depends on the style of consultant and the style of organisation. Atkinson named Brian Wilson's style as "professional" (a consultant working to a client's project requirements). In contrast, Atkinson saw Checkland's style as "liberal" (a guide and teacher), which Checkland described as "letting it emerge with the people themselves".

*It will be necessary for me to take into consideration the style of organisation and the style of facilitator in interpreting my case studies in the context of my research themes.*

#### 4.3.3 Cole

Cole described her style as one of facilitating - not overtly leading. She believes in empowerment of the participants in a project, and her role is to be a catalyst.

Cole added that hers is not an aggressive style and she fears that such an approach could lead to damage if not handled properly. She emphasised that people must own, see, believe, and not be made to feel ridiculous. They must own the ideas. She believes that it is important for people to be encouraged and praised for what they are achieving in the rethinking process.

Cole sees herself in projects as transferring the engine of change from herself into the organisation, releasing talents in some people and highlighting others who are stumbling blocks. However, Cole does not like to be introduced to participants as the change agent (this has occurred), as she is concerned that people see this as threatening.

Cole emphasised that people buy consultancy from people they trust - whether for business planning or building a house.

*I related strongly to Cole's description of her philosophy and style of facilitation, and believe they are close to my own.*

#### 4.3.4 Haynes

Haynes stated that as a facilitator he is playing the role of trusted consultant, message carrier, and personal adviser (depending on the client and project). He added that clients are looking for someone who is not a subject specialist. What is offered is intangible; on different projects the role can be anything from just to facilitate to decide totally the answers.

Haynes believes it is the responsibility of the consultant to manage any conflicts, and he is very sensitive to this issue. He emphasised that the consultant must deal with conflict as well as possible, recognising that conflict is an invaluable learning situation. People are expressing different viewpoints when conflict erupts.

*The need for trust in the facilitator relationship was also emphasised by Cole, and mirrors my belief. I believe it was an important factor in the client choosing me, based on past projects, for the two case studies.*

*The role of message carrier was occurring in Case Study 1 as I brought learning from one resource workshop to another. The message carrier, together with personal adviser role has been even stronger in my other projects when working at multiple levels in an organisation over a relatively long period of time.*

*The emphasis on the value resulting from conflict erupting was experienced in Case Study 2.*

#### **4.3.5 Scholes**

Scholes, stated that, as a consultant helping companies change, he recognises that he is not neutral. He has a particular, explicit point of view, eg.

- British companies typically rationalised the pressure of Japanese competition as an unfair advantage. They tended not to see the problem that they were not managing too well.
- Scholes believes the real competition is between different ways of thinking (and especially the management team and how it chooses to think).
- To compete managers must change the way they think.

From Scholes' perspective, the role of consultant is not one of Facilitator. This can be the role at the beginning of a project, but he emphasised that it is important to relinquish the facilitator role and allow people in the organisation to take on this responsibility. The consultant must coach others to become change agents

(recognising that in some respects they will not be as neutral and will have more vested interests than an outsider).

The role of consultant as Coach recognises that the consultant would have played the game before (and is therefore not neutral), but this time the team is playing the game.

The role of consultant can also be as Catalyst. In this case the consultant brings a specific experience to the project (in Scholes' case his previous work at ICL). This is not necessarily a wider experience but one which is specifically relevant to the client organisation. The consultant can therefore "share where they've been".

*Scholes has introduced a different perspective to the role of consultant as Coach or Catalyst, based on previous similar experiences to the challenges facing the organisation. This is different to my use of the facilitator role, although I do inevitably bring experiences from other consultancy projects*

#### **4.3.6 Conclusions**

The conclusions in relation to the facilitator's style are:

- Matching the organisation's culture and context with the consultant's style is key to successful organisational change projects.
- There is a wide range of consultant styles. These interviews identified styles from soft to harsh, from liberal to professional, and included therapist, mediator, counsellor, facilitator, catalyst, coach. The roles are not exclusive, and multiple roles may be used by a consultant within one project. However, it would seem that a specific consultant will tend to always be towards the soft or hard end of the spectrum. In addition, the roles are not without bias. (Identifying the researcher's style is important to giving context to this research.)
- Conflict may emerge in projects, and can be used to advantage. (As was the situation with Case Study 1.)



## 4.4 APPLICATION OF SSM

### 4.4.1 Generic Models

Examples of the use of generic models<sup>†</sup> were provided by both Atkinson and Checkland in each case for healthcare projects, and they expressed satisfaction with their use.

*I was not aware of the use of generic models prior to the interviews, and have concerns whether they are as relevant to the participants as original models developed with the involvement of each set of participants. Generic models were used in the case studies, and this concern was confirmed by some of the Case Study 1 participants' responses on the post-project questionnaire (see Appendix 6).*

### 4.4.2 Functionality

Atkinson discussed the concept of dysfunctionality, stating that he believes all Lancaster SSM work assumes there is functionality in any human activity system. Atkinson prefers the view that rules are emergent properties of the people within a system, ie mutually generated and prescribed sets of rules between people. This view allows processes to be viewed as purposeful but not functional (eg war, child abuse). He emphasised that such dysfunctional processes persist in society.

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<sup>†</sup> Generic Model: A conceptual model developed for one system which is considered to be generally applicable to another related system (or at least a starting point for amendment for the related system). For example a generic model could be developed for a hospital system, based on the analysis of one hospital, and then used as the basis for modelling for other hospitals.

*Activity models which are based on a primary task<sup>†</sup> root definition (as in the case studies for this research) are inevitably based on a rational and functional perspective. It is important to remember that political, personal, interpersonal and dysfunctional motivations will impact on the implementation of organisational change.*

#### **4.4.3 Pre-Workshop Interviews<sup>§</sup>**

Atkinson, Cole and Haynes introduced the topic of pre-workshop interviews.

- Atkinson explained that he uses pre-workshop interviews to build empathy. He believes this is essential because of the downloading of negative emotions/perceptions which occurs, and added that it may be necessary to spend some time resolving these before workshop sessions begin.
- Cole discussed pre-workshop interviews and stated “the floodgates open”. She believes this is a useful process enabling project participants to “let off steam” to an outsider. Then in the workshops the baggage has been left behind.
- Haynes emphasised that interviews are important to enable the consultant to get an idea of different Weltanschauungen. In addition, once the workshops begin the participants will feel they know the facilitator and have established a relationship. These interviews also provide a gauge of the scale of unhappiness of an organisation, i.e. measured by Haynes in terms of how long it takes participants to begin to tell him their concerns.

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<sup>†</sup> Primary Task: “A root definition of a system which carries out some major task manifest in the real world. (Checkland, 1981 p 317)

<sup>§</sup> Pre-workshop Interviews: Interviews which occur between facilitator and each project participant before workshops commence. The aim is to build empathy, brief the facilitator on key issues, and focus the participant on the SSM process.

*Prior to these meetings with UK consultants I was not aware that my experience in interviews where people download sensitive information was shared by other consultants.*

#### **4.4.4 Mode 1 and Mode 2**

Haynes explained that he uses SSM in different ways for different projects, or for different clients, eg Mode 1 (Checkland 1981) use in Health; Mode 2 (Checkland & Scholes 1990) in ICI. Haynes described the reasons for this:

“The Health Service want to be involved in the process. ICI just want results. There is more of a research ethic in Health. The research ethic in ICI is purely for product development not for new ways of thinking. However, in ICI using a known methodology (ie SSM) is important.”

Haynes added that he typically uses SSM “in the back of the mind”, recognising the Weltanschauungen. From the perspective of his project participants, SSM may be very hidden.

*The decision to use Mode 1 or Mode 2 depending on the project and the organisation, is of interest, rather than assuming that Mode 2 is always preferable or more sophisticated to Mode 1, which could be interpreted from Checkland and Scholes (ibid).*

#### **4.5 CONCLUSIONS**

The consultant interviews strengthened this research by reinforcing the views of the researcher gained in many other SSM consultancy projects and tested in this research, ie:

- Changes in organisational culture do occur in SSM projects when a significant shift in Weltanschauung occurs amongst a number of project participants.

- From the perspective of the consultant, the CATWOE and models of the SSM process are often the catalysts for moving to a changed Weltanschauung.
- There is a wide range of facilitator styles; however the style of the facilitator is critical to a specific organisation achieving cultural change.
- Factors about the organisation itself and its members are also key to the organisation's ability to achieve successful organisational change

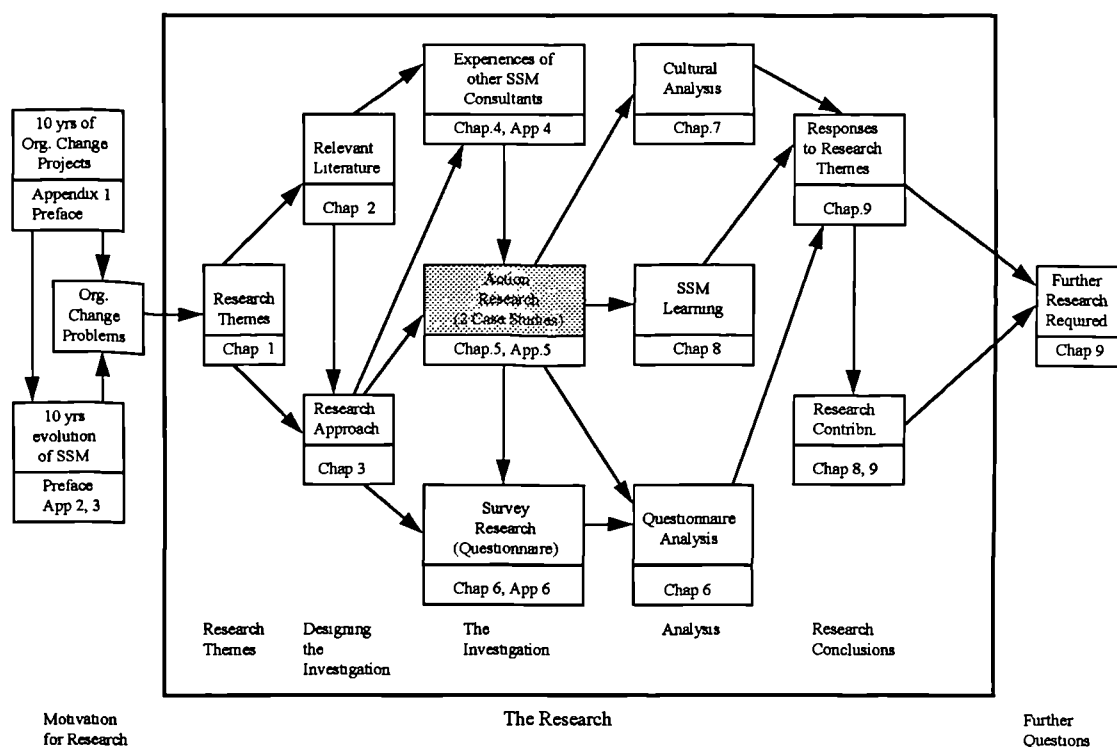
The interviews, therefore, confirmed the validity of the research objective, themes, assumptions and method of investigation, and assisted in the interpretation of the research results.

Chapter 5 summarises the process of conducting the case studies. As appropriate, views expressed by the interviewees will be compared and contrasted with the case study events.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE CASE STUDIES

Map of the Structure of the Thesis



### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

As described in the Method of Investigation (Chapter 3) the action research took place via two Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) case study projects. The detailed account of these case studies, developed from the researcher's diary notes, is presented in Appendix 5, recounted in the first person to acknowledge the researcher's subjectivity in the understanding of what happened. The detailed account is important to explain how SSM is used by the researcher in a participative workshop environment, as this will inevitably impact on the interpretation of research outcomes. It is also intended to serve as a guide or comparison for other SSM practitioners, although the process should always be modified for each client and problem situation.

This chapter provides an overview of the case studies and highlights the main interventions and the process of changes occurring in Weltanschauungen. Reference is made to the interviews with UK consultants (Chapter 4).

The researcher acknowledges inevitable bias in recording, via diary notes, the full detail of the case studies (Appendix 5) and in interpreting the way the changes in Weltanschauungen occurred (this chapter). Triangulation (eg Baskerville & Wood-Harper, 1992) is used to minimise the impact of this bias, by the introduction of participant viewpoints (ie the post-workshop questionnaire) and via feedback on the thesis from the project sponsor. The changing Weltanschauungen is also demonstrated by the type of strategies which were developed at the Gap Analysis stage in order to introduce organisational change.

The projects were not approached as PhD case studies, but as normal business consultancy projects. It was only at the conclusion of the projects that the researcher asked permission to use the work as case studies for this research. This is considered important since participants' behaviour was not altered because the projects were to be used for research. The concern to learn from "real" business projects was also reflected in the University of Lancaster's decision to carry out research in consultancy mode in order to gain access to real problem situations, although in their case they did declare the research objective in advance (Checkland, 1990 p 280).

Not declaring the research intent in advance made it inappropriate for the sponsor or participants to be asked to review the researcher's diary notes as the project proceeded, or to keep their own diary notes (as discussed by Baskerville and Wood-Harper, 1992 p 11). However, as previously stated, the thesis was later reviewed and confirmed by the sponsor, and he made the following comments:

"An excellent document, very thorough and accurate. An honest assessment of events. Also an outstanding document to learn from. With the benefit of hindsight I was very privileged and fortunate to have been involved with you during the time spanning your thesis."

This chapter is presented as follows:

- The Host Organisation
- Project Approach
- The Changing Weltanschauungen

## **5.2 THE HOST ORGANISATION**

Both case studies were carried out at the Crown Law Department (CLD - also referred to in the case studies as “the Department”), a Western Australian government agency. Case Study 1, the Corporate Services Review, took place between September and November 1992. Case Study 2, the Library Review, occurred between October 1992 and January 1993.

At the time of the case studies CLD reported to a Minister, the Attorney General, and had a total staff of 967, excluding the judiciary. While administrative support was provided by CLD to the judiciary, the judges and magistrates are a separate arm of government and did not report to CLD but to parliament. Similarly complex reporting arrangements applied to other programmes within CLD; though administratively these programmes were accountable to the Chief Executive Officer, CLD, the policy aspect of the programme reported directly to the Minister. These other programmes were the Crown Solicitor's Office, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Parliamentary Counsel's Office, Office of State Corporate Affairs, and Guardianship and Administration Board.

The mission of CLD recognised this service relationship to the courts and legal programmes, and at the time of the case studies was worded as:

To ensure the courts and the government are able to provide the people of Western Australia with an independent, responsive and efficient system of justice where all are equal before the law.

The researcher had carried out previous consultancies for the project sponsor, Glen Coffey (Assistant Under Secretary for Law and Director Corporate Services), and there was a good working relationship.

### **5.2.1 Corporate Services**

Case Study 1 relates to CLD's Corporate Services Division, which when the project began had 146 employees and was responsible for:

- Administrative Services (eg bond administration, criminal injuries compensation)
- Financial Services
- Human Resources (HR)
- Information Technology
- Internal Audit
- Management Services (an organisation and methods focus)
- Planning and Policy

The objective of the project was to carry out an organisation review (ie a review of the mission, activities and structure). All parts of CLD, apart from Corporate Services, had been reviewed recently. Corporate Services had deliberately been left to last as the rest of CLD are their clients and it was considered that the Corporate Services review should be in response to the new directions of the clients. As such, there was no stated "urgent problem to be resolved" and it was emphasised that no jobs were to be lost, but there was an opportunity to realign to become more effective. This contrasts with frequent use of SSM with a problem situation focus, eg Checkland 1981, Davies and Ledington 1992. It is, however, similar to a project described in the interview with Cole, where the reason for a project was simply that one Division which was not as "go getting", market oriented and commercial as other parts of the organisation; similarly Scholes outlined a project where the client organisation did not have a pressing problem but decided to start now to rethink what the future should be like (see Appendix 4).



### 5.2.2 Library Services

Again the objective was to carry out an organisation review. However, Case Study 2, Library Services was more complex, both in organisational structure terms and in the reasons for the project, as outlined below.

Within CLD there were two separate library services. Firstly CLD had a network of libraries reporting to the Crown Solicitor and funded from the CLD budget (known as the CLD Library). The main library was located in CLD head office and was used almost exclusively by lawyers from the offices of the Crown Solicitor and the Director of Public Prosecutions. There were also a number of remote libraries and collections at the Supreme, District, Magistrates, Children's and Family Courts as well as in individual Judges' chambers. However, resources were not available to provide staff at these sites, and services were minimal. Secondly there was the Supreme Court Law Library (known as the Law Library) serving the legal profession and judiciary, funded 50% by the Barristers Board and 50% by CLD. The Law Library also maintained a collection at the District Court.

The concerns which initiated the review were:

- The CLD Library service had a budget shortfall of \$110,000 and the government had refused to fund this shortfall unless a review of library services was carried out.
- The Chief Justice had written to the CLD's Chief Executive Officer asking for a review of Supreme Court Library requirements as the Supreme Court was not happy with the current provision from CLD Library.
- The two groups of libraries did not cooperate and there was a history of hostility.
- There was a perception of overlap in library services, eg at the Supreme Court there were the following library collections:
  - The Law Library
  - The Supreme Court Judges' Library (CLD)
  - The collection in each Judge's chamber (provided by CLD).

- The area was politically sensitive because of the reliance of lawyers and the judiciary on legal texts (their tools of trade which must be “at their fingertips”), and hence their willingness to use their political power to protect the autonomy of their library services and librarians. (This caused a number of complications and “political interference” throughout the project.)

Despite both case studies being in the same host organisation, the reasons for the projects, the culture of the groups involved, and the respective business environments were quite different. This provided an interesting basis for comparison of the research themes - Can SSM contribute to organisational change? What other factors impact?

### **5.3 PROJECT APPROACH**

The same broad approach was used for each project, thus assisting comparability from an action research perspective, ie:

- A participative approach was used, with all the analysis and decision-making taking place in workshops. The workshop participants were known as the Working Party.
  - For Case Study 1 there were seventeen participants representing each Corporate Services Branch, including all management and a range of staff from different levels and functions. The workshop participants were linked to other Corporate Services’ staff and brought their input and feedback to the workshops. (A similar approach to that used by Scholes, see Appendix 4.)
  - For Case Study 2 five librarians represented the two libraries.
  - The project sponsor, Glen Coffey, project manager (Neil Hunter, HR Manager), and Les Cooper (IT Manager) were workshop participants in both case studies.

- The role of the researcher was to facilitate the workshop sessions and provide advice on the approach to be used for the reviews. (The researcher interpreted the responsibilities of facilitator to be to guide, question, and be a catalyst for changed thinking, but not to make decisions - these must be owned by the participants.)

Methodology was never formally discussed and SSM terminology was not used.

*[This is an approach frequently used by the researcher, in contrast to the researcher's early use of SSM and compares with evolution in the use of SSM by the Lancaster researchers (Checkland 1991, p 221), and with comments made in the interviews with Cole and Haynes, Appendix 4.]*

- The formal project plans of both projects reflected the following iterative steps within SSM (based on the researcher's adaptation of the methodology, see Appendix 2):
  - Pre-workshop interviews with each participant (similar to those used by Atkinson, Haynes and Cole, see Chapter 4).
  - A series of workshops involving iterative debate and decisions about:

#### **Organisational Analysis & Synthesis<sup>\*</sup>:**

- - Issues impacting on the organisation - now and future.
- - Ethos and Vision for the organisation
- - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT)

#### **Elements of CATWOE<sup>†</sup>**

- Identification of clients and client needs  
(Case Study 1 involved client interviews and a client workshop, Case Study 2 involved a client survey and interviews)
- Why do we exist? (futures focus)
- What is our major task?
- What problems are we trying to address?
- What constraints/limitations are there on our role?
- How will we know if we are successful?

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<sup>\*</sup> Organisational Analysis & Synthesis: Term introduced by Galliers 1985, replacing Checkland's 1981 SSM stages 1 and 2 (ie The problem situation unstructured, The problem situation expressed). Also used in the researcher's adaptation of SSM, Appendix 2.

<sup>†</sup> CATWOE: Mnemonic for Customers, Actors, Transformation Process, Weltanschauung, Owners, Environmental Constraints. (Checkland 1981)

### **Activity Models (High level model, and model for each subsystem)**

- What Key Activities should we carry out to achieve the role?
- How should the Activities link together? (Model is developed)
- Keywords to describe each activity

### **Gap Analysis<sup>‡</sup>**

- Why will we carry out this activity?
- How will we carry out this activity?
- What are the resource and skill implications?
- What should be the organisational structure?
- What projects and initiatives are needed to achieve change?

Note: SSM terminology was not used in the case studies, and the actual wording of agendas is included in Appendix 5.

## **5.4 THE CHANGING WELTANSCHAUUNGEN**

This section aims to depict how Weltanschauungen began to change throughout the case study projects, using as evidence the information gathered in the pre-workshop interviews, the documentation produced from each workshop (recorded on an electronic whiteboard during each session), and the researcher's observation and interpretation of events (obviously subjective, but validated by the project sponsor). Each case study is considered separately and then conclusions are developed.

The focus here is on the SSM process (including the pre-workshop interviews). Further evaluation of the change in Weltanschauungen as shown in the post-project questionnaires is presented in Chapter 6, with more indepth analysis of culture and cultural change in Chapter 7, and systems learning in Chapter 8.

### **5.4.1 Case Study 1, Corporate Services Review**

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<sup>‡</sup> Gap Analysis: Researcher's term (see Appendix 2), replacing Checkland's 1981 stages 5, 6 and 7 (ie Comparison of conceptual models with reality; Feasible, desirable changes, Action to improve the problem situation).

The key events which contributed to changes in Weltanschauungen are shown below, in the order in which they occurred in the case study.

#### **a) Starting Culture: Pre-Workshop Interviews**

*Note: More detailed analysis of starting culture, applying the criteria of Davies and Ledington, 1991, is presented in Chapter 7 as part of the evaluation of receptiveness to change of the case study organisations.*

In order to be able to map the process of changing Weltanschauungen it is necessary to first have an understanding of the starting culture(s) of the project participants. To identify this each participant was interviewed for approximately an hour in a one-on-one session with the researcher. Detailed notes were taken, but were stated to be confidential to the researcher, although broad themes were extracted and later discussed with the project sponsor and project manager. As well as providing a broad appreciation of organisational culture and sub cultures, the aim of the interviews was also to build empathy between researcher and participant, to assist the researcher to understand key issues, to enable the researcher to focus the participant on the project's aims and process, and to encourage participants to think creatively about the future. Interviewees were told that no preparation was necessary for the interview and interview questions were not provided in advance, with the aim that the interviewees would "speak from the heart" rather than bring along prepared answers.

The interview format is shown below. The "You and Your Job" questions were based on Faerman & Quinn (1985), as discussed in Chapter 3, Method of Investigation:

#### **INTERVIEW FORMAT:**

- **Facilitator's Background**
- **Project Description**
- **You and Your Job**
  - What is your role, responsibilities and job description?
  - Why does your branch exist?

- Why does your job exist?
- How is your job changing and why? What future changes are anticipated?
- What are the major challenges?
- How is your branch's performance evaluated?
- How is your own performance evaluated ? What is valued most?
- Whose opinion matters to you in relation to your performance?
- What motivates you in regard to your job?
- How would you describe the style of leadership and management in your branch and in corporate services?

The weakness of using an interview process to understand culture is recognised, ie

“... the nature of the social system is not likely to emerge in response to direct questions. Direct questions will probably receive as responses the official myths of the situation.” (Checkland and Scholes, 1990 p 49)

However, this weakness is somewhat offset by the frankness and unburdening of concerns which inevitably occurs in these sessions (as confirmed in the interviews with Atkinson, Haynes and Cole, Appendix 4, and as has frequently occurred in the researcher's other SSM consultancy projects).

Conclusions about the pre-project culture of Corporate Services, based on these interviews is outlined below:

- **Roles**

Overall the impression was that participants believed that branches and jobs existed to provide service in a fairly passive or reactive way.

However, added to this there were also elements of a more authoritarian approach in managing and controlling activities. For HR and Finance there was a strong focus on carrying out information processing tasks.

- **Challenges**

The challenges identified were mostly inward focussed concerning planning, resourcing, cohesion and personnel issues, although there was a degree of outward focus on client needs.

- **Performance Evaluation**

This was not a focus and caused difficulty for most participants.

Evaluating performance tended to be from a user satisfaction perspective. There was a range of views on whose opinion matters - ie management, clients and self.

- **Personal Motivation**

Responses indicated a people or client focus (eg “I love dealing with people”), team spirit (eg “I enjoy the people I work with”), interest in the work (eg “variety”, “challenging”), and the working environment (“not being tied to the desk”, “autonomy”).

Working together as a team, with flexibility as to how to meet client needs, appeared to be important to job satisfaction.

- **Management and Leadership Style**

Here the existence of sub culture views became evident.

Eleven interviewees responded very favourably with expressions such as - great, a dream, participative, open, people given a chance, caring, helpful and supportive, good feedback, friendly, approachable, no bad guys, and management give us the authority to go ahead and operate.

In contrast six interviewees gave negative responses such as - them and us, favouritism, jobs for the boys, the purple circle, autocratic, inflexible, not consultative, intimidation not encouragement, closed

door, not working as a team, erratic, and not delegating. (These six were not from any one branch, job type or level in the organisation.)

## **b) Identification of Issues & Challenges in the Workshops**

The first key event which contributed to changed Weltanschauungen was the debate about issues and challenges in one of the early workshops. At this point the thinking began to expand with an increased focus on the external influences on the wider organisation (CLD) and their impact on Corporate Services' clients (in comparison with the rather narrow view of challenges discussed in the interviews). For example issues raised included increased crime resulting from unemployment and recession; change in client base with middle class more involved in the courts; resistance to change in the legal profession; demands from the government to use less resources and be more accountable.

The importance of this stage, (identifying issues and challenges) in contributing to change in Weltanschauung was confirmed in the post-project questionnaires where 95% of Case Study 1 participants regarded it as a critically important step. The brainstorming type approach used, however, does contradict with Scholes' emphasis (Appendix 4) that:

For the debate of big issues early in a project, 'fact based' is more useful than 'opinion based'. There must be preparation in advance with real numbers, perhaps using a business analyst. Alternatively a briefing pack can be prepared and given to participants to work on and arrive at their own conclusions - so they can tell the consultant. A discussion can then occur based on 'Which few things would really undermine our ability to do business?'

*[In the researcher's experience, debate of issues and challenges is usually significant in extending the thinking of participants to external issues and the future, and greatly aids the development of CATWOE.]*



### **c) Debate on Corporate Services Accountability**

The second key event where changing Weltanschauungen was occurring related to the questioning of Corporate Services' role. This debate was returned to many times throughout the workshops because an answer (or even two or three answers), which everyone believed was relevant, could not be found. Critical to this debate were the questions:

- Why does Corporate Services exist?
- For what is Corporate Services accountable?
- How will we know if we are successful?

The dilemma was in differentiating between Corporate Services responsibilities and clients' responsibilities in a devolved organisation where Programme Managers are accountable for all aspects of their programmes. For example, if a Programme Manager is totally responsible for the programme's human resources, what accountability does this leave for Human Resources Branch? This debate was strongly argued. Particular aspects were:

- Should policy be the responsibility of the Executive, Corporate Services or Programme Managers?
- Should Corporate Services' role be a reactive one in assisting programmes, or should it be a more proactive, strategic role - and what would this entail?
- Is using the word "ensure" too strong to describe Corporate Services' role. (Whenever this word arose there were those who argued heatedly that Corporate Services could not ensure anything as the Programme Managers had the power to do as they wished.)

Throughout this debate some participants were quick to move to a more proactive, strategic role for Corporate Services, while others were more unsure.

#### **d) Activity Models**

Checkland has emphasised that cultural values shape the conceptual modelling stage of SSM (1985b, p 831), and the researcher believed that activity modelling was significant to changes in Weltanschauungen which occurred in the case study.

In Case Study 1, a preliminary view of role (ie Weltanschauungen) had not been agreed at the time the development of conceptual activity models began. The models themselves, however, did appear to contribute to the changes in thinking which eventually led to an agreed role.

For example, the template<sup>§</sup> model provided by the researcher, and associated debate, resulted in new activities being included in the high level activity model which were not currently carried out by Corporate Services, ie:

- **Identify Client Needs:**

This indicated a move to a more proactive role. Significantly, the external impacts to this activity were identified on the model as being “government policy, CLD direction and programme needs”. While Corporate Services at that time had an active role in responding to government policy, there was no real identification or understanding of CLD direction or programme needs.

- **Develop Corporate Services Strategic Plan:**

Corporate Services had never had a strategic plan - neither had CLD or any of its programmes. In fact, one of the questions raised in early workshops was whether the various Corporate Services branches had anything in common. This activity suggested that they had so much in common that they should develop a Strategic Plan. It is also an

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<sup>§</sup> Template model: A starter model applicable to any human activity system, used as a basis for developing a client specific model. (See Appendix 2, Adaptation of SSM)

indication of a change to a more proactive, coordinated and strategic focus.

- Evaluate Corporate Services Performance

Not only was this a new activity, but external inputs included “client compliance with legislation”, indicating that some participants were beginning to see Corporate Services being accountable for what the Programme Managers did in relation to resource management policy.

- Develop and Care for Staff

This activity provides a social, people oriented focus, in contrast to the other more functional activities. To some extent inclusion of this activity also showed a cultural shift. Based on the researcher’s previous knowledge of the organisation it could be argued that the management team believed that Corporate Services did develop and care for its staff, and that this was central to their culture, which was characterised by team spirit and camaraderie. However, information gathered in the pre-workshop interviews, and reinforced by some participants when issues and weaknesses were debated in the workshops, indicated that in some areas of Corporate Services staff did not feel that there was a caring attitude. This appeared to be a shock to the project sponsor. Hence the activity in the model aims to formalise what was previously thought to happen spontaneously. This formalisation was further reinforced in the gap analysis stage when action plans were developed to ensure that effective management of staff would be a criterion in future performance evaluations for Corporate Services managers.

A further change in thinking also emerged from the activity modelling in terms of Corporate Services being responsible for resources - ie finance, information (extended to encompass library and records as well as information technology), HR and assets. The system boundary was being redrawn excluding some of the current administrative, audit and miscellaneous responsibilities, and introducing all areas of asset management.

In addition, the suggestion from the project sponsor to use the high level model as a generic model from which a second level model would be developed for each resource area created another change in thinking as the different areas realised that they had a number of activities in common (eg identifying client needs, developing strategic plans, evaluating performance) and needed to cooperate. A shared view was developing amongst previously fragmented branches.

The use of generic models is also highlighted in the interviews with Atkinson and Checkland, Appendix 4.

#### **e) Role Statements and Measures of Success for each Resource Area**

The development of role statements (ie Root Definitions) for each resource area, as part of the process of developing second level activity models, showed how far the move towards changed Weltanschauungen had progressed, even though at this stage the role of Corporate Services had not been decided. Some of the associated measures of success further highlighted this shift, as shown below:

- **HR:**

Role:

“To provide expertise to:

- Develop and coordinate HR policy, practices and standards;
- Provide HR services and advice

Creating the environment to maximise the potential of the Crown Law Department employees, meeting both individual and corporate needs.”

Measures of Success included:

Program Managers accepting responsibility for their staff.

- **Finance**

Role:

“To provide expertise to:

- Develop and coordinate financial management policy
- Provide financial and accounting services and advice

To secure the immediate and long term financial viability of the Department.”

Measures of Success included:

Availability of funds when required by programmes;  
Extent to which available financial resources are optimised.

- **Information Resource Management:**

Role:

“To provide expertise to:

- Develop and coordinate information policy, information standards and information dissemination
- Provide information services covering Library, Records, Information Systems and Information Technology

Creating an environment where the information is available to meet the current and future information needs of the Department.”

Measures of Success included:

The extent to which information meets needs.

- **Assets:**

Role:

“To provide expertise to:

- Develop and coordinate asset management planning, policy, procedures and standards
- Provide services and advice

In order to optimise the acquisition and management of assets and enable Programmes to achieve their objectives.”

Measures of Success included:

Value for money, ie Dollars Saved.

These role statements and measures of success suggested that a significant change in Weltanschauungen was occurring, from the reactive, service delivery and processing roles to a more strategic focus, including policy, procedures and standards, as well as provision of expertise in each resource area (beyond the expertise available in the client areas). This showed that Corporate Services was prepared to be accountable for the Department's overall asset performance - quite a shift from claiming that Corporate Services could not "ensure" that outcomes would happen.

However, there was not one moment in time that could be identified when this shift happened, rather it was a gradual evolution based on debate and iteration in the workshop sessions. This is in contrast to the events described in the interviews with Checkland and Cole (Appendix 4) where single events were catalysts for changed Weltanschauungen and "switched the light on".

#### **f) Second Level Models**

The development of the Second Level Models was a stage of clarifying and consolidating the changing Weltanschauungen for each resource area rather than radically new views emerging. However, using the generic model as a starting point, many activities were described which were either new or quite different to current activities, reflecting the role and measures of success shown above. Significantly the evaluation activity included in each model was worded :

"Ensure .... [name of resource area]... makes a difference to the success of the Department."

The models are fully represented in Appendix 5.

## **g) Gap Analysis**

By this stage of the project the changed Weltanschauungen for each resource area appeared to have become quite well accepted, and the terminology of the new role and activities for each resource area had been incorporated in discussion by the participants. (This issue of “talking the language” was highlighted in the interview with Checkland, Appendix 4.)

Examples of the action plan items which demonstrate the changed, more strategic Weltanschauung are:

- Achieve rich integration of Corporate Services people in the development of Programme strategic plans.  
*[Note: It had been realised that not only Corporate Services, but also the Programmes needed strategic plans.]*
- Educate our clients and individuals in how to optimise their HR.
- Develop expertise and strategies for management of change.
- Develop an ongoing strategic relationship between an Information Resource team and a Programme Manager.
- Work with Programme Managers to monitor and analyse revenue and expenditure, and identify opportunities to reallocate funds.
- Educate clients on deciding best options for asset acquisition.
- Apply value management process to evaluate the suitability/utilisation of existing assets.
- Monitor and measure achievements against the strategic plan.

A number of action plans related to evaluating performance and constantly realigning activities and direction. This also showed a change in thinking, given that the pre-workshop interviews indicated there had been little focus on evaluation before the project began. In the interviews with UK consultants (Appendix 4) the importance of the process of evaluation in achieving successful organisational change was mentioned by Atkinson and reinforced by Cole’s statement that “the learning organisation has the capacity to evaluate what they are achieving in organisational change terms.”

facilitator was manipulating, or alternatively simply knew the methodology).

However, the process could not be considered painful or harsh, and this is confirmed by the sponsor's comment on the post-project questionnaire:

“Stimulating and enjoyable. Not the destination, only the first step of the journey.”

The sponsor's final sentiment provides the reminder that it is in the implementation of the outcomes of the SSM process that the organisational change actually occurs - even though the implementation stage is outside the scope of this research.

#### **5.4.2 Case Study 2, Library Services**

The process of changes in thinking, and the associated milestones, were quite different for the Library Services Review when compared with Case Study 1.

##### **a) Starting Culture: Pre Project Interviews**

By the time the interviews were organised political difficulties, referred to earlier in the chapter, were evident. There was unease about the project on the part of the librarians, the Crown Solicitor and the Supreme Court Chair of the Law Library Management Committee, Mr Justice Ipp. This required a number of hastily convened meetings by the project sponsor in an attempt to resolve concerns about the project, its approach and potential outcomes (and especially the likelihood of one library service taking over the responsibilities of the other, or the library budget or collections being reduced). There was also the question from the CLD librarians as to why there was a requirement for a review when they had already written extensive reports justifying more staff, and these, they believed, had been ignored. A further complication was that, unlike Case Study 1, the project sponsor had no clear authority to run the project,



The analysis of required resources to achieve the changed Weltanschauung highlighted the significant change in skills and expertise required, and from a perspective of questioning whether the change is “feasible and desirable” (cf Checkland) it was decided that a staged process of implementation of the new role would be required.

#### **h) Agreement on Corporate Services Role**

Work had been progressing in workshops for each resource area, but it was only in the final workshop for the project that the participants returned to the wording for Corporate Services’ role. This did not turn out to be a major breakthrough in the project. Rather the role had consolidated in the minds of participants by this time and the wording was quickly decided, ie

“The role of Corporate Services is to improve the administration of justice through strategies to optimise the acquisition and management of the Department’s resources.”

In addition, a slogan for Corporate Services was agreed:

“Right resources, right place, right time.

*[In the researcher’s experience, with ten years of SSM consultancy projects, this was the only time that agreement on Weltanschauung had been so difficult to achieve, and had not been resolved until the very end of the project.]*

#### **i) Conclusion**

In the consultant interviews (Appendix 4), Scholes stated that “Organisational change is not painless” and referred to sessions which were “harsh (not neutral) - the facilitator versus them”. The process of reaching a shift in Weltanschauungen for Corporate Services had been challenging, workshop sessions had often been exhausting, and the project sponsor confessed afterwards that at times he felt the facilitator knew the direction but the participants did not (which could imply that the

ie neither of the library services reported to him, although he did have budget responsibility.

As a result the pre-workshop interviews were held in very sensitive circumstances. Necessarily the focus was on building empathy and listening to concerns, and the researcher considered that it was not appropriate to ask the structured questions used in Case Study 1. Therefore, the cultural analysis gleaned, and outlined below, may be less robust than that for Case Study 1, although, again it has been reviewed and confirmed by the project sponsor.

Eden and Huxham (1995, p 6) highlight the difficulty often experienced in action research in meeting the requirements of the research and the client, and recognise that addressing these dual aims often requires more effort in achieving research results than with other research approaches.

In analysing the pre-workshop interviews the same headings are used as for Case Study 1:

- **Roles**

Both library groups were very clear that their role was to provide professional library services to their clients.

- **Challenges**

As with Case Study 1, the challenges were inward focussed, concentrating on staffing and funding problems which prevented required collections and levels of service from being provided.

- **Performance Evaluation**

Performance was measured in terms of happy clients, and in the case of the Law Library - flowers and presents received in thanks.

- **Personal Motivation**

This focussed on a belief in the role of librarianship, as well as helping clients (and especially judiciary and lawyers).

- **Management and Leadership Style**

From both groups there was a sense of no-one in the organisation caring that they were struggling with these problems. Neither group felt that they really “belonged” organisationally - ie did not attend staff meetings of a wider group, or have a close relationship with a manager who cared for their welfare and fought for their resources.

## **b) Climate of the Workshops**

The changing climate as the workshops progressed was an integral part of the re-thinking of Weltanschauungen.

The climate of the first workshop was tense and cool, with clear camps between the two library groups, and a tendency to want to lay blame. At the second workshop conflict erupted with open hostility and raised voices. This, however, served as a catalyst to highlight the consequences of inappropriate behaviour and instigated a debate on achieving more appropriate interpersonal communication in workshops. That conflict can be positive was highlighted by Atkinson, Haynes and Scholes in the consultant interviews (Appendix 4).

From this point workshops were more convivial, and a closer rapport between all the librarians clearly supported the move to a change in thinking towards cooperation between the two library services.

*[At the time of the case studies, this was the first occasion in the researcher's experience that such overt conflict had erupted in a workshop.]*

## **c) Difference in viewpoint between Librarian and Non Librarian Participants**

The debating of the ethos for library services, the desired project outcomes, and SWOT analysis highlighted that there were fundamentally different viewpoints between the librarians and the Corporate Services managers, which neither wanted to change.

For example:

#### Ethos

- The librarians felt the highest priority was to be seen to be efficient and effective; the non librarians' highest priority was for librarians to be seen as invaluable.
- The librarians strongly disagreed with the idea of a fun working environment. They believed that their clients would consider this to be most inappropriate. In contrast, the concept of having fun at work was central to the team spirit and camaraderie of Corporate Services.

#### Project Outcomes

- The librarians' needs were to have resourcing and staffing problems resolved.
- The non librarians took a more functional view, and their expectations related to the review achieving identification of client needs and the best way to achieve them.

#### SWOT

- The weaknesses from the librarians' perspective related to resource shortages, "problems in getting our message heard", and concern that the government did not appreciate the critical need for a good legal library service (and hence had withheld funding pending a review).
- The non librarians introduced weaknesses relating to excessive duplication or under-utilisation of collection items (to which the librarians did not agree), lack of role clarity, no specification of clients' needs and priorities, the need to extent library services to all programmes, and concern that the library service was not mainstream to the Department's management.

It appears that these differences were useful in highlighting to each group that there were perspectives other than their own, perhaps insular, view of library services, since from this point on both the librarians and non librarians found it easier to communicate ideas and reach a shared understanding, towards an eventual shift in Weltanschauungen. Perhaps most important was the wider, more strategic view put forward by the managers, since the librarians later commented that the process had helped them to learn to “talk the language”.

#### **d) Role**

In contrast to Case Study 1 the role statement was quickly agreed. However, the process of developing the statement was not particularly important to creating new Weltanschauungen as Case Study 1 was progressing ahead of Case Study 2 and the participants in the Library Services Review simply adopted Corporate Services’ statement for information resource management, as shown earlier.

The catalyst for changed thinking was that the librarians accepted that their activities belonged within a wider group of activities which also included information technology and records management. Having made this connection, it followed that activities such as “Identify Client Needs” and “Develop the Information Resource Management Strategic Plan” would also apply to library services, and the librarians readily agreed to this.

#### **e) Activity Models**

In addition to the inclusion of the new activities identified above, the development of models provided a further opportunity for changed thinking as explained below.

The first model developed had the activities:

- Identify library resources required
- Acquire and manage resources
- Organise the collection
- Maintain the collection
- Provide specialist services

In the following workshop this very functional view was debated again and changed to a more strategic perspective, ie:

- Develop and implement information policy and standards
- Provide and access information resources
- Optimise information resources

In the interview with Checkland (Appendix 4) he referred to a similar change in conceptualisation in a Humberside project and identified that this was a catalyst for a changed Weltanschauungen.

#### **f) Gap Analysis**

The Gap Analysis stage was, perhaps, the most significant of all in achieving changed Weltanschauungen.

Steps involved were to analyse the gap between the current situation and the role and conceptual models, and to analyse the interviews and questionnaires which had been carried out to identify clients' requirements for library services and collections.

The gap was so wide, yet the desirability of closing it unquestioned, that the workshop participants were forced to think laterally about what action could be taken. Most relevant in terms of changed thinking were the decisions to:

- Streamline the common service requirements (ie library processing tasks) across all library services, using improved information system support, or devolution or outsourcing, wherever possible.
- Identify major client groups and provide small library teams at client locations. These teams would be linked to wider information resource teams encompassing information technology and records. The teams would carry out information needs analysis and provide information services. The aim was that by this means the duplication and barriers between CLD Library and the Law Library would disappear.
- Locate the new library services as part of the new structure of Corporate Services, within the Information Resource area.

The librarians had moved from an insular view of libraries and their clients to a perspective which placed them within the wider scope of information resource management. In the case of the CLD libraries their horizons had also broadened from a processing focus (albeit because of resource constraints) to providing a professional range of information searching and retrieval services. It appeared the barriers and hostilities between the two library groups had begun to be resolved with plans developed to cooperate in the provision of library infrastructure and client services. A shift in thinking had occurred.

## **5.5 CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter has identified how the process of change in Weltanschauungen occurred in two case studies, from the perspective of the researcher, using the steps in the SSM process. Although within the same organisation, each study was different in terms of the reason for initiation of the project, the culture of the participants, the interpersonal

interaction within the workshops, and the milestones which were significant to changes in thinking.

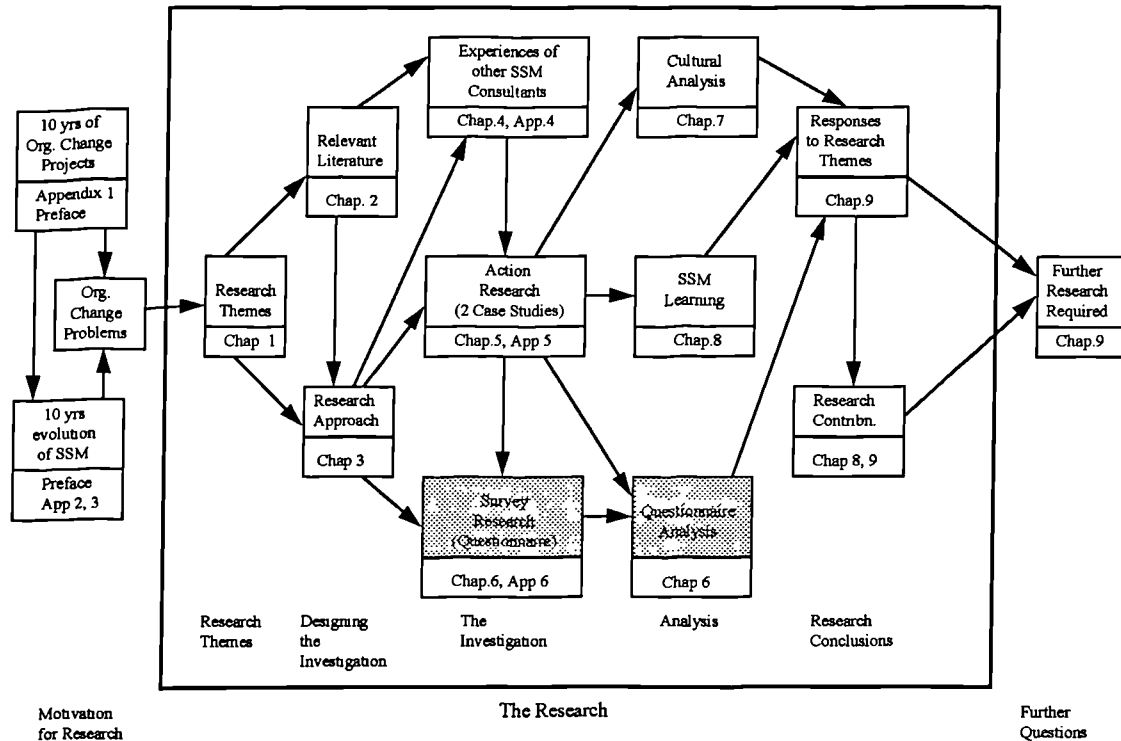
The analysis in this chapter has been from the researcher's viewpoint (although confirmed by the project sponsor). The reactions of the project participants to the SSM process are critical to the ability to respond to the research themes posed. These are presented and analysed in Chapter 6 and compared and contrasted with viewpoints in this chapter.



## CHAPTER 6

### ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDY QUESTIONNAIRES

Map of the Structure of the Thesis



### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 provided an overview of the action research, via two case studies, and highlighted how the change in Weltanschauungen occurred, from the perspective of the researcher (ie consultant). This perspective was verified by the project sponsor, Glen Coffey.

However, the conditions of proof for the research themes, shown below, also require identification of change in Weltanschauungen and contributing factors from the participants' perspective.

#### Conditions of Proof:

1. Belief that a change in Weltanschauung has occurred by project sponsor, project participants and project consultant.

2. A change in expression of Weltanschauung by Soft System Methodology (SSM) project participants, before and after the project, and an acceptable degree of similarity in the changed Weltanschauung by a number of the participants.
3. Identification of contribution to cultural change by various techniques within SSM, both from the perspective of the participants of the case studies and the views of other SSM consultants.

The aim was not only to test whether cultural change had occurred, but to further the understanding of whether some, or all, participants may have a different interpretation of the SSM experience in comparison to that of the consultant and sponsor. The majority of the SSM literature focuses on the consultant's interpretation of the project and the outcomes achieved, and to some extent on the sponsor's acknowledgment of this. The literature tends to either overlook the participants' views, or to assume that the participants have the same perspective as the consultant and sponsor. If change in organisational culture depends on ownership and commitment of the participants, then it is critical to know whether the participants in any SSM study, who presumably will be key to implementing the change, have the same, or similar views, to the sponsor.

It is acknowledged that Checkland highlighted as early as 1981 (p 19) that the participants' perceptions were important, ie:

“The success of the methodology, in the real-world actor's terms, rather than in the analyst's, makes it useful both to compare it with other works elsewhere and to ask: What does the success imply about the ultimate object of enquiry, namely social reality?”

However, the actor's perception of the success of what happened in the problem solving system seems rarely, if ever, to have been asked, analysed and documented.

In the case studies some understanding of the pre-project Weltanschauung of each participant was achieved by the pre-workshop meetings via the question “Why does your branch exist?”, and to some extent by the question, “Why does your job exist?” The cultural context in which the answers were given was gleaned in the other questions asked in the interviews (See Chapter 5). However, it was decided inappropriate to use interviews to test post-project Weltanschauungen as by this time the researcher had become part of the human activity system of the review, and it

would therefore be more difficult to gain an unbiased answer from the participants. Therefore it was decided to use an anonymous questionnaire to evaluate changes in Weltanschauungen and contributing factors.

The weaknesses of the survey approach were recognised, ie:

Likely that little insight obtained re the causes/processes behind the phenomena being studied. Possible bias in respondents (cf self-selecting nature of questionnaire respondents); the researcher, and the moment in time which the research is undertaken. (Galliers, 1992b, p150)

These weaknesses were partly overcome by asking for comments on each question, and by the fact that a one hundred percent response rate was achieved. However, there were further concerns whether during the review the participants had separated the Problem Solving System from the Problem Content System (Checkland, 1981), ie whether they had thought about methodology at all since SSM had not been mentioned or taught during the case studies. Thus there was the danger that the questionnaire might pose questions which the participants had not considered and therefore might answer superficially. In addition, since the questionnaires were deliberately anonymous it was not possible to match back a questionnaire response to a pre-workshop interview and directly compare each participant's shift in Weltanschauung, although shifts by the group could be identified.

The project sponsor voluntarily identified his questionnaire response which provided the means of comparison between sponsor and participants.

This chapter presents the questionnaire and conclusions from the analysis of responses. The full detail of the reasons for each question, the responses and the researcher's reflections are provided in Appendix 6. The many comments added by the respondents add richness and insight to the ratings.

## 6.2 THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The Corporate Services' questionnaire as shown below was developed with input from the project sponsor and project manager. It was modified slightly to make it specific to Library Services.

### ***CORPORATE SERVICES REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE***

*We are interested to learn from the way we conducted the Corporate Services Review and would appreciate your time in filling in the following confidential questionnaire.*

*We wish responses to be anonymous, so please do not enter your name or signature on the questionnaire.*

*All members of the Working Party are being asked to complete the questionnaire. A summary of responses will be made available to the Working Party.*

1. *Please state **in your own words** what you believe was the **ROLE** of Corporate Services immediately before the Review.*
2. *Please state **in your own words** what you believe is the new **ROLE** of Corporate Services, i.e. after the Review.*
3. *Do you believe the new Role is the correct Role for Corporate Services?*

YES                      NO (Please circle)

*Any comments?*

4. *We want to understand what you believe to be the factors **which most contributed to the development of the new Role**.*

*Please rate the factors below as follows:*

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 | <i>Critically important factor, key to the development of the new Role.</i>               |
| 2 | <i>Useful, but not critical. We may have arrived at the new Role without this factor.</i> |
| 3 | <i>Irrelevant. This factor had no impact in terms of helping us develop a new Role.</i>   |
| 4 | <i>Negative impact. This factor made it</i>   |

*more difficult for us to develop a new Role.*

***There is no limit to the number of factors which may be rated as a 1, 2 3 or 4.***

***Any further comments you would like to make would be appreciated.***

	<b><i>Factors</i></b>	<b><i>Rating</i></b>
a)	<i>PERSONAL INTERVIEWS with the FACILITATOR before the workshops began</i>	....
b)	<i>The explanation of the PURPOSE and OBJECTIVES of the Review</i>	....
c)	<i>Use of WORKSHOPS as the basis for participation and discussion</i>	....
d)	<i>The role of the FACILITATOR</i>	....
e)	<i>Leadership and involvement of SENIOR MANAGEMENT from CORPORATE SERVICES</i>	....
f)	<i>Enabling ALL CORPORATE SERVICES staff to provide input to the workshops</i>	....
g)	<i>Identification of ISSUES affecting the future of CORPORATE SERVICES</i>	....
h)	<i>Discussion of PRELIMINARY VISION, ie Your "ideal" view of Corporate Services</i> - <i>What would it be like working here?</i> - <i>What would Clients think about us?</i> - <i>What would be different?</i>	....
i)	<i>Identification of STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS</i>	....
j)	<i>Input from CLIENTS</i> - <i>Internal</i> - <i>External</i>	.... ....
k)	<i>Use of Models of KEY ACTIVITIES (Bubble Diagrams) to discuss WHY we should carry out the activity, HOW, and RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS</i>	....
l)	<i>Learning more about other CORPORATE SERVICES BRANCHES during the Review</i>	....
m)	<i>Working with colleagues to develop the new ORGANISATION STRUCTURE</i>	....
n)	<i>OTHER. (Please add and rate any</i>	

*further factors you believe should  
be included in the above list)*

***ANY OTHER COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE  
ABOUT THE REVIEW?***

*Thank you for your participation.*

## **6.3 ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES**

### **6.3.1 Case Study 1, Corporate Services**

Although there were sixteen workshop participants for Case Study 1, twenty responses were provided. The reason for this was that during the project some participants had been replaced while they were on leave. All who had participated, at any stage, arrived at the final workshop where the questionnaire was administered and provided responses, though in some cases not to every question (ie parts of the project where individuals were not involved) .

Responses to the questions are summarised below:

#### **a) Change in Weltanschauung**

Questions 1 and 2 aimed to achieve an understanding of whether a change in Weltanschauungen had occurred, and if so, whether a number of participants would express the same changed Weltanschauung. The responses to these questions are provided in terms of the statement of the role of Corporate Services, before and after the review, from the perspective of the researcher, sponsor and participants.

- Consultant's View:

Before the review Corporate Services provided services in response to client needs, and these were mostly of a processing or advice nature.

After the review Corporate Services has taken a strategic responsibility to optimise the Department's resources in order to improve the administration of justice in Western Australia.

- Sponsor's View:

Before: To optimise the provision and management of the Department's resources.

After: To improve the administration of justice through strategies to optimise the acquisition and management of the Department's resources.

- Participants' Views:

It was decided that to meet the criterion of participants describing a change in Weltanschauungen which was close to the view of the facilitator and sponsor the answers should move from a less strategic role to a more strategic role, usually in the form of "provide service or support" (before) to a more proactive role such as "optimising resources to meet Departmental or client objectives" (after).

9 participant responses fully met this criterion.

A further group of 7 participants described the role being extended to meeting client needs in a closer relationship with clients. These 7 were near the view of the facilitator and sponsor, but had not taken such a strategic perspective.

A third group of 4 participants did not believe the role had changed, or had only changed by adding another function to the scope.

The conclusions were that:

- Facilitator and sponsor had essentially the same final Weltanschauung.
- Almost half of the participants also had this view.
- One third were quite close, but has missed some essential element.
- Less than a quarter had not perceived a change in Weltanschauung.
- In comparing the “before” understanding of role as expressed in the questionnaire with the comments made in pre-workshop interviews, there was consistency, since the words used in the interviews had reflected a reactive role in providing support or services.

In addition, question 3, “Do you believe the new role is the correct role for Corporate Services?”, was exploring whether the participants in the case study truly agreed with the new role, or whether they disagreed but had decided not to voice this in the workshop. This attempted to address, to some degree, the concern of the proponents of critical systems thinking (eg Jackson 1982, Rosenhead 1984) that inequalities in power and resources amongst participants prevent genuine discussion and agreement. 17 out of the 20 respondents answered “Yes” to question 3. Some of the comments made in regard to this question also reinforced that cultural change had occurred, eg:

- The change in view is from being a service provider to being an essential integral part of the Department to improve the Justice System.
- Getting away from just a ‘service’ oriented role and being more proactive.
- It is clear to most people, I think, that Corporate Services really does have a vital part to play through the stated role.
- Given that Programme Managers main concerns in the past have mostly revolved around their resources, I believe the new role is most appropriate.

In terms of the conditions of proof, the majority of participants had demonstrated the belief that a change in Weltanschauung had occurred, and there was an acceptable degree of similarity in the changed Weltanschauungen by a number of the participants. From this perspective it can be concluded that, to the extent that Weltanschauung expresses those aspects of culture relating to the primary task of the organisation, some change in organisational culture appeared to have occurred.



## **b) Contribution to Cultural Change by Various Techniques Within SSM**

The percentage of participants rating an item “1” (critical) was as follows:

Identification of issues	95%
Leadership and involvement of senior management	86%
Identification of SWOT	85%
Working with colleagues within the Branch on organisation structure	83%
Input from internal clients	79%
Explanation of the purpose and objectives of the review	75%
The role of the facilitator	75%
Input from external clients	69%
Use of workshops	68%
Enabling all corporate services staff to provide input to the workshops	66%
Discussion of preliminary vision	43%
Learning more about other Corporate Services branches	37%
Personal interviews with the facilitator	35%
Use of key activity models	33%

Conclusions are:

- Activity Models

Perhaps the most surprising response, given the extensive use of activity models in the workshops, was that this factor was only considered critical to

achieving a changed Weltanschauung by a third of the participants. This is in direct contrast to the sponsor's and researcher's viewpoints (See Chapter 5) and the sponsor's rating of 1 (critical) and comment on the questionnaire:

“Very easy to understand and conceptualise. Allows presentation of ideas and concepts very simply and efficiently, and avoids long narrative paragraphs of prose. Assists vision development - a picture paints a thousand words. Establishes context and forces assessment/analysis of why events/activities are undertaken. Ensures those activities undertaken are priorities. Always gets back to why.”

This low ranking of activity models also contrasts with the SSM literature, eg Checkland (1981), Checkland and Scholes (1990), and the emphasis given to models as catalysts to organisational change in the interviews with Checkland and Cole (see Appendix 4).

It may have been that the use of generic models had made the modelling less relevant, as indicated by one questionnaire comment: “Sometimes they didn't fit, therefore confusing the issue”. However a number of respondents rating the models as “1” (critical) made very positive comments, eg “Clear picture, assisted to understand what we should be doing and clarify roles and structures”.

- Facilitator

The impact of the role of the facilitator was given particular importance in the interviews with UK SSM consultants (Appendix 4). While rating as “1” (critical) by three quarters of respondents, six other factors were considered more important. However, no-one rated this factor at “3”, or “4”, and five comments were made that it was important that the facilitator had been neutral, unbiased, and with no vested interest, although one comment questioned whether the facilitator had been leading the direction. The role of facilitator as “mediator” between the staff and senior management was also referred to (a role discussed by Atkinson, Appendix 4). The sponsor's comments (following a “1” rating) give further insight into his requirements for a facilitator:

“Critical to the success of the review. Equally important is the style, approach, method of operation, personality, attitude, commitment, care and skills of the facilitator. Liz = 10 out of 10.”

- Identification of Issues

It was not surprising that this factor rated so highly. Issues and challenges were debated many times during the workshops, both for Corporate Services and for each Resource Area. As identified in Chapter 5, they were considered an important factor by the researcher in extending thinking towards changed Weltanschauungen. Typical comments were:

- Made people aware of the number of issues and that similar problems were faced across Corporate Services.
- We needed this to help shape our thoughts.

- Evidence of Sub Cultures

It was noted in the analysis of the pre-workshop interviews that several interviewees held negative views about management and leadership style which were contrary to the perceptions of the majority, and possibly indicated the existence of a sub culture. That these views had continued, to some extent, was highlighted in two of the questionnaire comments, eg

- I believe it would have been better received generally had senior management not ‘pretended’ they had no preconceived ideas. (They’d be pretty hopeless managers if they didn’t.) The ideas could just have usefully been put forward for discussion in an open way, thus avoiding some suspicion and mistrust among staff.
- It seemed to me that the decision as to the new structure had been decided prior to the review, and the working party approach was just for show. This was illustrated easily in some areas when suggestions for change in the new structure were ignored.

From the researcher’s perspective neither of these allegations could be substantiated, as in contrast to some other consultancy projects, there genuinely did not appear to be any preconceived solutions, and this had made the case studies ideal opportunities for SSM action research.

Overall, the questionnaire responses indicate that the use of SSM was very hidden, in Mode 2 style (Checkland & Scholes 1990). This use of the methodology was

appropriate to the business project, but leaves the question whether a different outcome, in relation to factors contributing to changed Weltanschauungen, would have been achieved in a more overt use of SSM, perhaps with pre training in methodology, had been used.

Nonetheless, in terms of the conditions of proof, factors contributing to changed Weltanschauungen had been identified.

### **6.3.2 Case Study 2, Library Services**

It had been decided for business reasons not to impose on the sponsor and other Corporate Services Managers who were participants in Case Study 2 by asking them to complete a second questionnaire. Therefore, there were only four respondents for this questionnaire, the two senior librarians and two of their staff members who were the most consistent attendees at the workshops. Therefore the rating analysis of the responses is clearly not statistically relevant. In any case, most of the ratings were either “1” or “2”.

#### **a) Change in Weltanschauung**

The researcher’s view was that a change in Weltanschauung had taken place in Case Study 2, as shown below:

Before: “To provide basic library services to specific clients, within resource constraints.

After: “To be an integral part of an information resource team, providing strategic information and library services which contribute to the administration of justice in WA”

However, the questionnaire responses indicate that none of the librarians perceived a major change in role, but rather that resources would be available to provide additional services to a wider client base, as shown in their statements of role before and after the project:

Before: "To provide legal information to CLD legal and para legal staff and the judiciary."

After: "The role is essentially unchanged. However there was useful clarification of the role (especially from clients) and resources needed to fulfil this role."

Before: "Provision of library materials within available funding. Limited reference service on request."

After: "Provision of agreed library materials within a budget. Provision of library services as desired by users and within staffing limitation."

Before: "Providing a specialised library service to Crown lawyers, judiciary, magistracy."

After: "Given that extra resources can be provided to more adequately meet the needs of the above, and then additional resources provided, to widen this role to include an information service to other Corporate Services sections, and the wider Department."

Before: "To provide an efficient and cost effective library service to Judges, Magistrates and Crown lawyers to enable them to meet their objectives."

After: "As above. However, within sufficient resources should also provide library services to the executive, IT and HR areas."

These responses were surprising given the degree of changed thinking that the researcher and sponsor had observed during the project (see Chapter 5). However, the two comments added to Question 3, "Is this the correct role?" (to which all answered "Yes"), provide further insight:

"This belief does not stem from the review. It has always been taken as highly desirable - even very uncomfortable that we couldn't fulfil this role."

"On track to developing full library service requirements for the Courts of the State. In time these libraries should be developed and devolved to the bodies they serve (5 year time frame)."

It could be concluded that, based on their professional education, the librarians had always believed their role was to provide a full range of information services, backed

by an appropriate library collection. The problem was that they had never been able to promote and justify this role, and hence had not been resourced to carry it out.

## **b) Contribution to Cultural Change by Various Techniques Within SSM**

Given the small number of respondents, and relatively few comments added, this analysis was less useful for Case Study 2, and especially since all questions had largely been rated “1” or “2”. However, some of the comments do provide insight, eg:

- Personal interviews with the facilitator before the workshops began:

“Complexity of Supreme Court history, management, etc needed to be aired and reason for being communicated.”
- Use of workshops as the basis for participation and discussion:

“Provided opportunity to offer suggestions and solutions without (too much) dissent!”
- The role of the facilitator:

“Invaluable, though she earned her respect and money!”
- Leadership and involvement of senior management:

“Thought they learned as much as they gave - captive audience, but appreciated the opportunity.”

“Thank you!”
- Identification of issues affecting the future Library Services:

“The need to confront the future and bury the past was critical.”
- Use of models of key activities:

“Simplified and involved all, therefore decision arrived at more comfortably.”
- Working with colleagues to develop the new organisation structure:

“This was immensely rewarding. I think we buried a lot of misconceptions.”
- Other comments:

- “The notion that we could be committed to excellence under the new structure.”
- “Perceived ongoing support from IT, HR and other Corporate Services.”
- “Recognition of the essential services provided by CLD libraries and of the staff requirements necessary to provide such services.”
- “For the first time, the Library was seen by other Corporate Service areas as belonging in this type of forum, ie raised profile and raised credibility.”

These comments indicate that some change had occurred to the extent that the librarians now felt understood, empowered, and part of a wider team, and as a result were more confident that the message of what they wanted to achieve had finally been heard. The comments, and ratings, also indicate that they believed the SSM process and the way it had been applied had been useful in achieving this outcome, although no individual factors in the process have been singled out as especially significant.

#### **6.4 CONCLUSION**

The one hundred percent response rate added validity to the conclusions reached from the questionnaire analysis. However, it is recognised that the sample size was very small and that there are weaknesses in such analysis because a questionnaire is a ‘snapshot in time’ and can be affected by the individual’s mood and/or external factors, as well as the difficulties involved in questionnaire design.

For Case Study 1 the conditions of proof had been met to the extent that a change in Weltanschauungen had been expressed, and that these changed Weltanschauungen were similar for a number of participants. In addition, the factors within the SSM project which contributed to this change had been identified.

In contrast, despite Case Study 2 being in the same wider organisation, with some of the same participants and the same approach to SSM, the respondents had indicated that they did not believe a change in Weltanschauungen had occurred, thus not meeting the conditions of proof. They did, however, believe that positive outcomes had been achieved and that all of the factors in the SSM process had contributed to this.

Chapter 9, research findings explores further the type of change which had occurred in Case Study 2, and whether it could be interpreted to be a change in some aspects of organisational culture, despite the participants' responses.

In addition, the analysis of the questionnaires, while providing responses to the conditions of proof, does not assist the ability to generalise from the research to other projects and other organisations, and therefore, while interesting, does not contribute significantly to the testing and extension of theory. Chapter 7, cultural analysis, and Chapter 8, SSM learning, aim to overcome this problem.

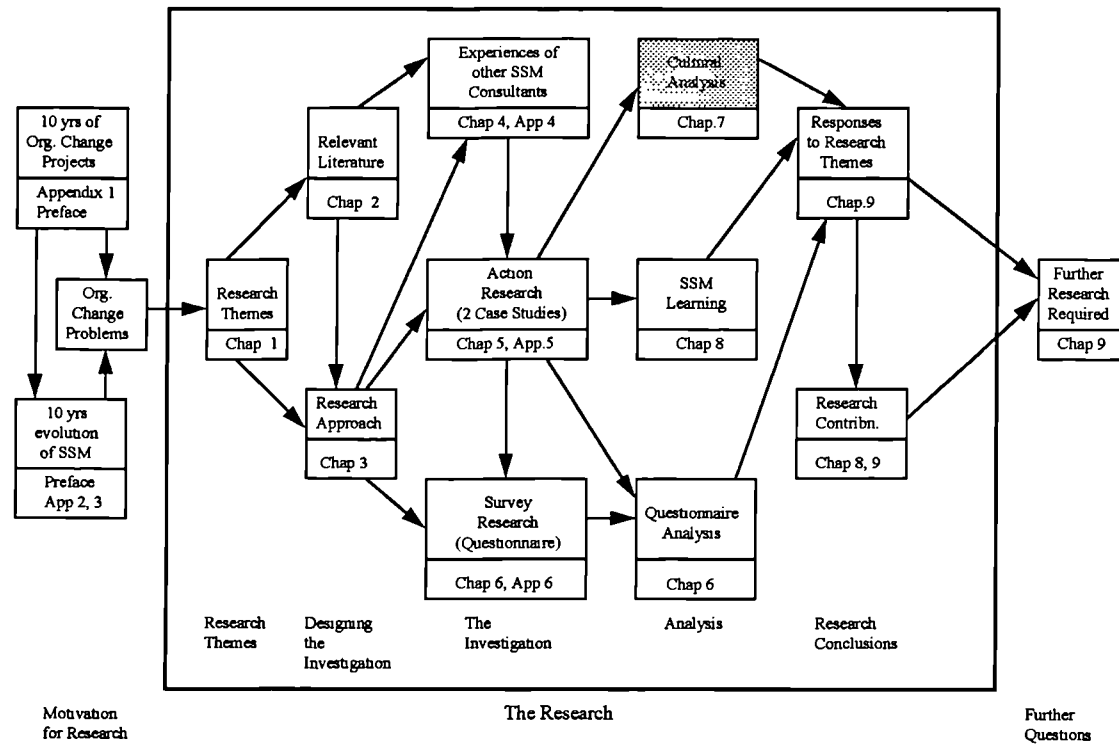


# CHAPTER 7

## CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE

## CASE STUDY ORGANISATIONS

Map of the Structure of the Thesis



### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 evaluated the case studies and concluded from the perspective of the researcher and sponsor that change in Weltanschauungen had occurred during the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) process, and how this had occurred. Chapter 6 analysed the post-project questionnaires and determined that in Case Study 1 participants believed there had been a change in Weltanschauungen and had rated the factors which contributed; in Case Study 2 the participants did not acknowledge a change in Weltanschauung but believed the project had achieved positive outcomes, and

suggested that all aspects of the SSM process had contributed. The problem with these analyses, however, is that they provide little indication of how the conclusions can be generalised and hence contribute to the testing and extension of theory.

This chapter:

- Analyses the literature of organisational culture in order to identify the various concepts of both culture and organisations which underpin this research.
- Provides an analysis of the history and culture of the case study organisations.
- Evaluates how receptive these organisations were to cultural change.

The aim is to provide a means of comparing other organisations and projects with the case study organisations and thus be able to generalise the extent to which the outcomes experienced in this action research are likely to be applicable elsewhere. This cultural analysis also assists in explaining the behaviour, debate and decision-making which occurred during the SSM process. (See Appendix 5 for the full account of the case studies.)

## **7.2 ANALYSIS OF THE LITERATURE OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**

The literature of organisational culture is complex and contradictory with a rich mixture of viewpoints and approaches. This is not surprising since, firstly, the concept of culture originated from the discipline of anthropology where there is no agreement on the meaning of culture (Smircich, 1983 p 339), and secondly, because the large commercial organisation is a relatively recent phenomenon and researchers are still searching for the most appropriate “intellectual template” to capture the essence of such organisations (Ouchi and Wilkins, 1985 p 477). It is also important to acknowledge that the complexity of understanding culture is increased because of the existence of sub-cultures; there is “a mosaic of organisational realities rather than a uniform corporate culture.” (Morgan, 1986, p 127). Sub cultures may, for example,

be based on professional/occupational groups (as in the instance of the Librarians in Case Study 2), social or ethnic groupings, or coalitions based on personal ends such as career advancement.

In addition, not only is there a range of perspectives on the concept of culture, there is also a range of viewpoints on the concept of organisations, as outlined below:

### **7.2.1 Concepts of Culture**

The literature can be grouped, firstly, into those researchers whose views of organisational culture are based on anthropology, versus those perspectives derived from sociology (Ouchi and Wilkins 1985), and secondly, macroanalytical versus microanalytical approaches (Smircich 1983). However, given the complexity of cultural concepts, these groupings are inevitably superficial and meant only as a guide to the literature. Much of the research does not fit neatly into any of the categories.

Anthropological concepts of organisational culture are based on the view that culture is an independent variable. Within this viewpoint are perspectives of culture as behaviours and beliefs which maintain social structure; culture as a large complex personality; culture based on patterns and assumptions; and culture based on standards and rules which shape perceptions and actions. Research focuses include culture as a rational instrument used by management to shape the behaviour of employees (Ouchi and Wilkins, pp 460-462), and comparative management studies where culture, as a background factor, is compared across different countries as a basis for learning about organisational effectiveness (Smircich, p 343).

In contrast, sociological concepts of organisational culture are based on the view of culture as a dependent variable, something an organisation *is*, rather than something an organisation *has* (*ibid* p 347). This view emphasises myth, rituals, stories and legends, as well as the impact of the environment on behaviour, and sees organisations as culture producing phenomena. Cultural research from the sociological perspective

focuses on systems theory, organisational development, organisational survival, organisational effectiveness, receptiveness to change, the use of culture to build commitment and motivation (*ibid* pp 344-347) , as well as challenging the establishment and “taken-for-granted social reality” (Ouchi and Wilkins, p 469). Researchers differ as to whether culture can be altered or manipulated.

Microanalytical researchers view culture as something within each individual which is manifest in the individual’s sense-making and learning. Macroanalytical approaches focus on a group’s rites, ceremonies and popularly told stories about hero figures (Smircich, p 471).

This research is closest to the sociological concepts of culture, recognises culture as a dependent variable, and takes the view that the people of an organisation *are* the culture. In addition, the microanalytical approach is especially relevant since the research, in focussing on Weltanschauungen, recognises the importance of an individual’s sense-making and learning; however, the research also recognises the importance of identifying rites, ceremonies and popularly told stories in order to understand culture (see the cultural analysis, 7.3 below).

From the perspective of microanalytical concepts, this research raises an important question as to whether changing the Weltanschauungen of a group of individuals (as in the instance of Case Study 1) results in cultural change. Morgan (1986 p 131) provides the viewpoint that “organisations are in essence socially constructed realities that rest as much in the heads and minds of members as they do in concrete sets of rules and relations”. When groups of individuals mutually define their interpretation of the world they have a much greater tendency than is usually realised to produce a world which meets their own viewpoint. “A competitive ethos produces competitive environments. Visions of recession produce recession.” (*ibid*, p 137) Therefore, according to Morgan, effective organisational change depends as much on change in the mindset of individuals as on changes in roles, structures, skills and technology. It is necessary to change corporate culture in order to achieve organisational change.

Smircich (p 350) also identifies the cognitive orientation to culture and organisation and states “much organisation research ignores the place of the human mind.”

There is also the question of how many people in an organisation need to achieve a changed Weltanschauung in order for cultural change to begin. Morgan (1993) uses the technique of “imaginization” to create new images of organisation and to facilitate change in mindsets. In analysing a number of imaginization case studies Morgan explains:

- “You look for every seed of enthusiasm, and try to build pockets of success... If you can get four or five managers to buy into an idea and deliver a success, they will tell others, and off it goes.” (*ibid* p 47).
- “Large-scale transformation and change tend to occur when developments reach the critical mass represented by the ‘hundredth monkey’. But the process usually begins at a more modest level, with individuals or small groups of people taking the initiative.” (*ibid* p 292)
- “...change is an individual affair. Individuals can form groups, and groups can become social movements. But the process begins and ends with the commitments and actions of individuals.” (*ibid* p 293)

This research did not *prove* that change in Weltanschauungen led to a measurable change in organisational culture. However, Case Study 1 in particular, did show that there was a change in mindset in relation to primary task Weltanschauung, and both Case Studies showed that the participants intended, via their action plans, to make some changes in values, behaviours, roles, policy, procedures, technology, skills and structure. This would appear to be consistent with the viewpoints of Morgan, above, and give some confidence that change in Weltanschauung by a group of individuals could lead to a process of organisational and cultural change. Morgan (1986 p 132) also confirms that structures, rules, policies, goals, missions, job descriptions and procedures are reference points for the way people make sense of their organisation, and are indeed “cultural artifacts”.

### **7.2.2 Concepts of Organisations**

Morgan (1986, p 12) highlights that many of our viewpoints about organisations are based on “taken-for-granted” images or metaphors. These may be explicit and rational or implicit and non rational (Ouchi and Wilkins, p 459). Many researchers contrast the images of organisations as machines versus organisations as organisms (eg Morgan 1980, Koch and Deetz, 1981). The machine view focuses on task completion and organisations as purposeful instruments, while the organism perspective sees organisms as adaptive mechanisms, struggling for survival in a changing environment (Smircich, p 340).

Many other concepts of organisations are represented in the literature, including organisations as purposive groups of individuals working towards shared goals; organisations as information processing systems, as theatres for performance of roles and dramas, and as political arenas for pursuit of power. (Ouchi and Wilkins 1985, Smircich 1983).

This research primarily takes the viewpoints of organisations as organisms, and as individuals working towards shared goals, while recognising the perspectives of organisations as information processing systems and as political arenas.

## **7.3 CULTURE BEFORE THE CASE STUDIES BEGAN**

The aim of the cultural analysis presented below is to give context to the case studies in order to assist in making comparisons with other organisations and other action research.

The analysis is carried out based on the following assumptions:

1. Analysis of an organisation's culture is extremely complex, cannot be over-rationalised, and will never be "correct" (Morgan 1986). In addition, where culture is analysed against particular criteria, there is no agreement whether the results can give an indication of organisational effectiveness (Reynolds 1986).

The literature provides no single, definitive and agreed set of rules to assist with cultural analysis.

2. To some extent there are more similarities than differences between people in the same type of organisations. For example, the similarities between all factory workers irrespective of which city in the world is being studied (Morgan 1986, p 113). Thus there are taken-for-granted similarities between people in all public sector organisations, all justice agencies, all corporate services and all libraries. The cultural analysis below aims to highlight those special qualities or differences which characterise the case study organisations.
3. Existence of subcultures will further complicate the search for understanding of organisational culture (eg Smircich 1983).
4. There is extensive debate in the literature about whether culture can be changed. There are arguments that values are difficult to change, but roles can be renegotiated quickly (Davies and Ledington p 41); that the aim should be to change the behaviour but not the overall culture (Wilhelm 1992); and that managers should not assume that culture can be manipulated (Frank 1987).

It is assumed that cultures do evolve and change (Morgan 1986) and that such change can be guided to some extent, dependent on a number of variables (Pettigrew 1992). Such change impacts on people's interpretation of roles, values and norms\*, and hence influences beliefs and behaviours. This research

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\* Roles, values and norms: Roles are expectations regarding behaviour - "We learn how to be part of social life through role-dependent behaviour." (Davies and Ledington, 1991 p 40). Roles result from classifications about what is appropriate behaviour, and these classifications are value laden. Therefore, values shape roles by determining what is correct behaviour. In a wider sense, norms also

is therefore taking a generic overview of cultural change and not trying to measure specifically whether it is values or roles, or behaviour which actually changes (although there is an attempt to analyse this in broad terms in Chapter 8).

5. It is acknowledged that Weltanschauung is not an expression of all aspects of culture. However, this research is especially interested in changes in organisational role (reason for being) which result in the need to change beliefs, behaviour and values (culture). Therefore it is assumed that changes in Weltanschauungen are an indication of some change in culture, when using a primary task approach to SSM analysis. Further, it could also be argued that in the case studies completely new Weltanschauungen did not result but rather a refocussing of the old Weltanschauungen. It is assumed that this is not critical if the change resulted in a perceived need by the participants to alter behaviour significantly.

In presenting the results the subjectivity of the researcher is acknowledged. However, it is also emphasised that the analysis has been checked and confirmed, without amendment, by the project sponsor, Glen Coffey. The limitation of the participant/observer approach taken to the cultural analysis is also acknowledged. The literature of organisational culture is divided on methods of analysis and there is conflict amongst researchers between the merits of statistical approaches (eg multivariate analysis) versus rich descriptions based on lengthy field observation over a number of years. (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985, p 474). The analysis below, while fitting in the field observation category, was not based on lengthy, formal observation. However, the researcher had been involved with the Crown Law Department on a number of projects over a four year period. and would, inevitably, have informally gathered perceptions of the culture.

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affect behaviour - they are the moral code, ie "We don't do things this way here." (Davies and Ledington, *ibid* p 41).



The analysis of culture is developed from the answers to questions by case study participants in pre-workshop interviews, the researcher's observations at these interviews, and the researcher's perceptions from prior involvement with Corporate Services managers.

The analysis is based on the work of Davies and Ledington (1991 p 45). They developed their cultural attributes based on a review of the culture literature and their own research, with the aim of assisting the cultural analysis stage within the revised version of SSM (Checkland and Scholes 1990). Davies and Ledington's view of culture includes recognition that "the world of culture is a world of symbols and artifacts" (*ibid*, p 43), and that organisational culture is continually reconstructed. Their recommendation is for the interventionist and participants to explore the cultural analysis together, to recognise subcultures, and to not use the attributes as a cookbook for cultural analysis. In developing the cultural attributes Davies and Ledington are emphasising that culture is shaped by:

- The organisation's history and transformations, including the value of past leaders.
- The organisation's and its industry's regulations, legal forms, technology and economic factors. (The "Contingency" attribute.)
- The symbolic artefacts which characterise and differentiate the organisation including tales, myths, legends and logos.
- Formal goals, policies, recruitment practices and reward structures.
- Behaviours, as characterised by norms, role models, rituals and rites.

The reason for choice of Davies and Ledington's approach to portray the culture of the case study organisations was that they, too, were working within an SSM study and had tested their attributes in that environment. The researcher believed that these attributes, although a sub-set of the rich and complex concepts of culture, as discussed above, would be adequate to enable comparability of the research with other organisations and other action research. The weakness of the attributes in not focussing on microanalytical approaches (ie the cognitive approaches of the individual) was recognised. However, it was considered that this had been well covered, at least for

Case Study 1, by the data provided in the pre-workshop interviews (See Chapter 5 and Appendix 5).

Each cultural attribute is discussed below. The questions for each attribute are taken directly from Davies and Ledington. The responses, based on the researcher's perceptions, often require a comparison to be made about special characteristics of this organisation's culture in comparison to culture of other organisations. This comparison is assisted by the researcher having worked closely with many organisations on similar projects over a ten year period. However, the conclusions from these comparisons will obviously be biased by the researcher's own history and values. In this context, it is appropriate that it is noted that throughout the working relationship with Corporate Services the researcher had often told them that they were regarded as a very special group with a camaraderie, warmth and team spirit beyond that which is found in most other organisations.

For each attribute the response is made in terms of the culture of the majority. Where it is considered that the subculture view differs this has been added. The subculture views were gathered in the pre-workshop interviews and emanate especially, but not exclusively, from two branches where there were perceived to be management problems. It is not known to what extent, if any, the people with the subculture views, which are generally negatively opposed to the major culture views, actually communicated these views to each other and hence bonded as a subculture.

### 7.3.1 History

*"What historical factors are taken to be held as most dear? Who are the hero figures of the past? What tales of times of stress, problems, and changes are continually retold? What values are held as vital and attributed to events with past leaders etc.?"*

#### Case Study 1:

This is a difficult question. The focus on past leaders was not particularly relevant to Corporate Services as the CEO had held his position for many years, and would thus have been the only CLD CEO known to most case study participants. The same was relatively true of the management team. In addition, this question was not asked in the interviews. However, in recalling past events it is believed that the CEO is referred to with fondness for his benevolent paternalism.

The stories which are retold are about humorous social events, party tricks and hoaxes; for example, contributions by branches to the annual Christmas comedy concert (which branch

produced the performances which were the most daring or humorous?), birthday presentations, and the camaraderie on interstate and overseas trips together. The value placed on team spirit, mateship and humour was emphasised when Corporate Services made a video, about six months before the case study, of the last day at their former building. The video was a humorous summing up of life over many years in the old building, featured many of Corporate Services staff, poked fun at the traditions which they held dear (eg good standards for the IT environment, customer service), and at the same time recognised the achievements of staff. Management were not spared - they joined in the fun on video and were made to look ridiculous along with the rest of the staff.

Stories of times of stress inevitably related to problem situations which had occurred with particularly powerful client groups in the legal area or courts. This possibly indicated the concern to have good customer relationships, and to some extent the imbalance of power between these powerful groups and Corporate Services.

The history and context of CLD had led to a feeling amongst Corporate Services and other administrative staff that their business environment is very special, ie the judiciary and legal world. This required unique understanding, which was usually acquired by length of service. They believed that this set CLD people apart from others in government. In addition they believed that CLD played a very important role in society, and this has been recognised by government - if necessary as a result of pressure which could be applied by some of the power brokers such as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

#### Sub Culture Views:

No sub culture view are known for this attribute.

#### Case Study 2:

Several factors resulted in the researcher having a less deep and rich understanding of the culture of Case Study 2. There were only four Librarian participants (although the composition of this four did change in early workshops), there were no structured pre-workshop interviews, and the timescale for this study was more compressed with less workshops. There are obviously many aspects of the cultures of the two library groups which are not represented here. For these reasons it was also not possible to identify subcultures.

The analysis of the history of library services is as follows:

The history of the different birth, roles and funding sources of the Law Library versus the CLD Library, and the importance of maintaining these separations were told repeatedly.

The impact of lack of resourcing on the inability to provide required library collections and services was another common theme.

Pressures resulted from staff shortages, conflicts between the two library groups, and inability to have their problems heard and understood.

There were no stories of hero figures of the past from the perspective of CLD Library. The Law Library regarded as heroes the judges who had supported their cause.

#### 7.3.2 Contingency

*“What economic factors are likely to be peculiar to this setting, for example how are limited resources prioritised and valued? What factors of the incumbent society are likely*

*to affect the values of the members? What forms of technology, if any, are dominant within this situation? What legal forms are particularly relevant to the situation?"*

#### **Case Study 1:**

A formal, proceduralised and rather bureaucratic budget process was in place, based on the State Government formula. This process was generally thought to be fair. Contrasting with this formalised budgeting there was evidence of lateral thinking and a quite entrepreneurial approach, illustrated by the way some years before the project sponsor (who was then IT Manager), with support from his peers and the CEO, had introduced a levy on court transactions in order to build quite a significant fund for computerisation of the courts. Even though the levy was eventually deemed contrary to policy by central government agencies, and discontinued, the tradition of finding new and creative (though legal) ways to secure budget funds continued.

In justifying and allocating Corporate Services' component of the government allocated budget, priority was placed on funding for information technology and staff development via external training programmes, including for senior management. These training programmes had a significant focus on personal and interpersonal development, especially for senior staff.

Information technology was being rapidly introduced throughout CLD and Corporate Services, though, perhaps significantly, electronic mail had not been introduced and was not considered a high priority, which may have been an indication of the success of other informal networks. However, in interviews and the first workshop there were a number of references to problems of information flow across Corporate Services.

#### **Sub Culture View:**

The view was expressed that staff resources are extremely restricted (in terms of numbers) in some branches, with an implication that other branches fair better.

#### **Case Study 2:**

There were "peculiar" economic factors in the mixed funding source - government and Barristers Board - for the Law Library.

Budget limitations, to the extent of no funding for the year's serial subscriptions until a library review was undertaken, were having a huge impact on the CLD Library. (This constraint was externally imposed by the government's Economic Review Committee.)

Limited resources were prioritised based on client need, which inevitably meant the collection needs of the most powerful clients.

Both libraries were impacted by the culture and values of their primary client groups - the Legal Programmes for CLD Library, the Supreme Court Judges for the Law Library.

Technology was impacting on both library groups, in that lack of technology was further frustrating the problem situation. The Law Library did not have library management software; the CLD Library did not have online searching of external databases.

#### **7.3.3 Symbolic Forms**

*"What verbal symbols are used in this situation but uncommon elsewhere, for example 'He's a waste of rations'? What non-verbal forms are most apparent such as logos,*

*architecture, and commonly found formal and informal behavioural idiosyncrasies? What tales, myths, legends are spoken of as being worthy of continual debate for newcomers? Listening to stories, gossip, and jokes can help to uncover what is important here."*

### **Case Study 1:**

It was easy to be aware of the sincerity and warmth with which management team members gave the Australian greeting, "G'day, (person's name), how are you?", and then waited with genuine interest for the response. There was a caring attitude towards what was happening in people's families and wider lives.

In casual conversation, sport - and especially support for local football teams - was a common topic, with a great deal of friendly banter about the relative merits of different teams.

Jokes, including quite risqué renditions, were a common part of conversation. Everyone was included, but there was never any suggestion of offending anyone personally.

A warm, open style of decor to create an enjoyable working environment was considered important. Corporate logos were not particularly evident.

Words which stand out from the interviews are:

- Service, clients, users.
- THE COURTS! (said with a knowing tone, or reverence, or frustration - but always with emotion)
- Time pressures.
- Open door.
- Work should be fun.
- The team.
- Importance of standards and consistency (IT).
- Keep questioning and reviewing.
- Be flexible for the judiciary.
- "Don't pass the buck"

Subculture Views:

- Camaraderie may be at senior levels, but doesn't go further.
- Users are fickle and can be unreasonable.
- Some management have a closed door and you don't know how to approach - difficult to speak and say what the problems are.

### **Case Study 2:**

The librarians were keen to present a professional, business-like image and to appear continually busy (which is not to imply that they were not continually busy). This resulted in stories, gossip and jokes being "driven underground", and hence being less apparent to an outsider.

The Law Librarians especially liked to recount stories of informal conversations with the Supreme Court Judges, and especially where this reinforced their support for the library.

Characteristic words and phrases:

- Law libraries are different
- We know our clients

- Increasing costs
- Staff shortages

#### 7.3.4 Formalisms

*“What structures are adhered to and what history do they have? What policies are ‘untouchable’? What recruitment and training procedures are taken as most important? What reward processes are operative and which are considered difficult to change?”*

#### Case Study 1:

The most dominant structures are the formalities involved in interaction with the courts - formal correspondence; prescribed methods of address both written and verbal (eg refer to Supreme Court Judges as Mr Justice ...; District Court Judges as Judge ... ); hierarchies based on status within and between the courts; meeting procedure and language (eg “permission to speak through the chair”). The formality is based on the history of pomp and protocol and symbols of authority within the courts. However, the protocols were relaxed in some informal office meetings between senior administrative staff and the judiciary.

To a lesser extent the formality was also reflected in interaction with legal programme areas such as the Crown Solicitor and Director of Public Prosecutors.

Within Corporate Services bureaucratic structures were not imposed. People with talent were often recognised (by management) by being seconded to work on special projects.

The “untouchable” policies are stated to be those related to human resource management legislation - equal opportunity, sexual harassment, etc.

The internally generated policies regarded by management as untouchable related to:

- The “proper planning” of projects and processes and the setting of standards, even if this takes longer.
- The concept of participation - involve people, including “ask the clients”.
- Maintain standards and consistency, but be flexible where the judiciary are concerned, recognising the urgency and complexity of their needs.

Recruitment and training aspects were:

- Promote from internally wherever viable; provide career paths and opportunities.
- Look for graduates and try them out. (IT)
- Provide specialised inhouse, on the job, training because our environment is different and special.

Rewards for achievement are considered important - warm and positive verbal feedback, a physical pat on the back, celebration of successful events with greeting cards, presents, cakes, drinks or parties.

Subculture Views:

- Favouritism; jobs for the boys; the certain type of person who fits in - otherwise out in the cold. Jobs for people in the network - the person you know - the purple circle.
- Lack of recognition of work done.
- People not treated well.
- Intimidation rather than encouragement.

## Case Study 2:

Again, the most dominant structures are the formalities involved in interaction with the courts - formal correspondence, methods of address both written and verbal) eg refer to Supreme Court Judges as Mr Justice ..., District Court Judges as Judge ... ); hierarchies based on status within and between the courts - who may speak to whom. For the librarians this formality was also reflected in interaction with senior personnel in legal programme areas such as the Crown Solicitor and Director of Public Prosecutors. However, more so than with Case Study 1 there was a second, less obvious network of more informal and even social contact with these clients where the formalities did not apply.

Policies relating to classification were considered “untouchable”, despite the different classification schemes used by the two library groups. The concept of Judges’ chambers collections was also considered “untouchable.”

The professional ethics of librarianship were strongly defended.

Training was provided inhouse because it was considered there were no external training courses available for law librarians.

Informal reward processes operated within the library where there was strong team spirit (in the face of externally imposed adversity).

### 7.3.5 Behaviours

*“What are the norms of behaviour, both formal and informal? What are the acceptable forms of personal identity? What are the conformity expectations and the limits of acceptable rebellion? Who are the key role models? What rituals and rites are performed?”*

#### a) Norms of Behaviour/Conformity: Case Study 1:

- Observe formality with the judiciary, although it is acceptable to be informal (outside the Court) with most Magistrates.
- Do not offend the clients, and especially the Judges.
- Do not get entangled in central agency affairs. Keep them on side, but at a distance.
- Support each other in a team-spirited way, and especially when one member of the team has problems (this was particularly evident in one branch).
- Show warmth and respect to everyone from the CEO to the tea lady.
- Be cheerful and pleasant. It is good to ask searching questions, but this cannot be done in an aggressive way. It is not acceptable to show temper.
- Join in CLD sporting activities. (Groups jogged together at lunchtime. CLD won that year’s government sporting competition.)
- Go on personal development courses together (management team especially).
- Delegate (although sometimes this was a spoken philosophy not fully followed in practice).
- Bring projects in on time and to budget. (IT)

#### Case Study 2:

As for Corporate Services:

- Do not offend the clients, and especially the Judges.
- Support each other in a team-spirited way, and especially when one member of the team has problems (within each library group, but not across groups).

Always provide a friendly, helpful service to library users.

**b) Personal Identity**

**Case Study 1:**

- Nicknames were encouraged.
- Use family photographs, children's artwork to personalise office space.

**Case Study 2:**

- Use family photographs, children's artwork to personalise office space.

**c) Role Models**

**Case Study 1:**

For many the role models were key members of the management team, and other administrative managers outside Corporate Services.

**Case Study 2:**

Not known.

**d) Rituals and Rites**

**Case Study 1:**

- The Christmas show, where each Branch performed a humorous skit.
- The Friday morning restaurant breakfast of CLD and other admin managers - to share ideas.
- Steering committees for projects, plus other types of user committees in the IT environment.
- Celebrating birthdays, weddings, births - ranging from morning tea or flowers, to a "strippergram" for a big event.
- Joke telling in the tea room.

**Sub Culture View**

Not consultative, can't have an alternative view.

**Case Study 2:**

- Celebrating birthdays, weddings and births with cakes for morning tea.
- Active involvement in the wider library and legal world, attending meeting and perhaps holding office in professional associations and groups.

### **7.3.6 Conclusions**

The above analysis, based on the work of Davies and Ledington (1991) has highlighted the similarities and differences between the two case study organisations and identified where sub culture values conflict with the culture of the majority. The analysis should



also provide a deeper understanding of why events and decisions occurred during the SSM process, as a basis of comparison with studies in other organisations. It also provides the basis for applying the criteria in the following section of this chapter, in order to determine the degree of receptiveness to cultural change of the case study organisations.

#### **7.4 DEGREE OF RECEPTIVENESS TO CULTURAL CHANGE**

In order to generalise the findings from this research it is important to determine whether the culture of the case study organisations assisted the cultural change which occurred, in addition to contributing factors in the SSM process which were identified in Chapters 5 and 6.

The work of Pettigrew et al (1992) was selected to provide the criteria by which receptiveness to cultural change could be evaluated. The reason was the recency of their research and the rich context in which it was developed, eg comparison of a number of National Health Service (NHS) districts at a time of high organisational change to determine degree of receptiveness to cultural change.

Pettigrew's frame of reference is the literature, plus personal research, relating to innovation and the management of change within organisations. This introduced a different perspective into this research and complements the cultural analysis above which was based on Davies and Ledington's analysis of the literature and their own research in the discipline of organisational culture. Pettigrew found that the analysis of the literature on the management of change did not reveal answers to the question of why the pace of change differs in different organisations/localities, and did not link rate and pace of change with concepts of receptivity and non-receptivity. There is therefore a leading edge quality to their research.

Pettigrew's criteria recognise the importance of:

- Embeddedness (the need to study change at interconnected levels of analysis).

- Temporal interconnectedness (organisational changes - past, present and future).
- Context and action (how each is the product of the other).
- Complexity of causation of change (neither linear nor singular).

(Pettigrew et al, 1992 p 269)

Some of Pettigrew's criteria were omitted as inappropriate for this analysis, i.e:

- "The quality and coherence of policy at local level" which was evaluating the ability of districts to generate their own policy, separate to central policy.
- "The fit between the District's change agenda and its locale", which compared local differences in the environment such as unemployment and trade union influence.

In addition, Pettigrew's criteria were compared with those identified in the literature, and two more criteria were added:

- "Integrative structure and culture" based on Kanter (1985) and mentioned, but not used, by Pettigrew et al (1992, p 270).
- "Participative approach to defining cultural change" from the analysis carried out by Smith (1986).

The resultant criteria are shown below, and evaluated using all the available data and perceptions from the case studies.

It should be noted, however, that the purpose is a little different to Pettigrew et al who used the criteria to compare the results of different districts which were in the middle of organisational change programmes. The purpose in this research was to understand more about the change in Weltanschauungen which occurred by considering how receptive the organisations were to such change. Some non-comparative way of responding to the criteria was therefore needed, and, given the acknowledged tentative nature of the analysis, it was decided to use a simple evaluation of Yes, No, or To Some Degree. To give any further statistical breakdown would have given a false indication of the accuracy and reliability of the analysis.

The responses indicate the researcher's perception of the culture, including the impact of subcultures, and should be understood in the light of the cultural analysis presented above. The validity of the responses is impacted by the difficulty in identifying and measuring culture, and the fact that the analysis was carried out by the researcher. However, once again, the sponsor reviewed and validated the analysis.

Questions are answered briefly, as a summary of all the analysis which has been undertaken in previous chapters and appendices.

#### **7.4.1 Availability of key people leading change**

##### **Case Study 1:**

YES: Corporate Services management took an active part in the review. The CEO was openly supportive and a member of the steering committee.

##### **Case Study 2:**

YES: Corporate Services management took an active part in the review. Neither Library reported directly to Corporate Services, and this would have to be changed for the CLD Law Library before Corporate Services could lead the required change identified in the gap analysis stage of the SSM process. There were indications that this could be achieved. It was not likely that this could ever be achieved for the Law Library, but leadership could be assumed via the management committee.

#### **7.4.2 Long term environmental pressure - intensity and scale**

##### **Case Study 1:**

NO: There was no external pressure to introduce change at the time of the review. Clients were not demanding changes or expressing dissatisfaction, other than for some minor items.

##### **Case Study 2:**

YES: There was significant and long term pressure in terms of client dissatisfaction with some aspects of service/collections, and there were external budgetary constraints to be resolved.

#### **7.4.3 A supportive organisational culture**

Each of Pettigrew's components is considered:

##### **a) Flexible working across boundaries rather than formal hierarchies:**

###### **Case Study 1:**

To some degree, although rarely for the Courts.

###### **Case Study 2:**

To some degree: Limited by the formalities of the Courts, and by the historical conflicts between the two library groups (although there were indications that this was being overcome during the SSM process).

**b) Focus on skill rather than rank:**

**Case Study 1:**

YES: As evidenced by the opportunities given to people considered talented to be seconded to special projects, etc.

**Case Study 2:**

To some degree: There were boundaries between clerical staff, library technicians and librarians.

**c) Open risk-taking approach:**

**Case Studies 1 and 2:**

NO: Rather a planned, well thought through approach. Developing project plans, carrying out feasibility studies and developing standards were considered important.

**d) Openness to research and evaluation:**

**Case Study 1:**

YES: The review itself, and the seeking of client input/feedback, both in the review and in general are indications.

**Case Study 2:**

To some degree: The difficulties and concerns at the instigation of the review indicate hesitancy. However, by the end of the review it appeared that the value of the evaluation process was recognised, and to the extent that it might bring resources and a sense of belonging to the mainstream of the Department, then research and evaluation would be supported.

**e) Strong value basis:**

**Case Study 1:**

YES: Values were clear and reinforced as shown in the cultural analysis above.

**Case Study 2:**

YES: Based on the professional ethics and aspirations of librarianship, and especially law librarianship.

**f) Strong self image and sense of achievement:**

**Case Study 1:**

To some degree: Some Corporate Services branches had very high self image based on a belief in their special skills and knowledge. Other branches (typically where the management problems occurred) were less self confident.

However, overall the self image became a little less certain when they compared themselves with the status and power bases of the courts and certain legal programmes.

Again, sense of achievement was very high in some branches because of the successful projects and innovations introduced. In the areas with the management problems there was not a strong sense of achievement.

**Case Study 2:**

To some degree: There was high confidence in the skill base in law librarianship. However, there was not a high sense of achievement and this was attributed to resourcing problems.

#### **7.4.4 Integrative Structure and Culture**

The components are:

**a) Team-orientation:**

**Case Study 1:**

YES: Very strong in the culture. Embedded in the structure of HR, and planned to be introduced to structures across Corporate Services as a result of the review.

**Case Study 2:**

To some degree: Very strong within each library group, perhaps based on the small team size and the common external problems faced. However, the changes proposed required this to be expended across the library groups where team-orientation had never existed.

**b) Cooperation:**

**Case Study 1:**

YES: Highly valued and actively pursued, although inevitably there will be breakdowns.

**Case Study 2:**

To some degree: There was an ethic of cooperation within each library group, between each library group and external libraries, and between each library group and its clients. However, the changes required this cooperation to be especially strong across the two library groups, and this had never previously occurred.

**c) Strong idea generation and exchange:**

**Case Study 1:**

To some degree: Evident in only two of the four branches, as before.

**Case Study 2:**

To some degree.

**d) Sense of purpose and direction:**

**Case Study 1:**

YES: Before the review the purpose and direction was expressed by all participants to be the achievement of client service. This changed after the review to a more strategic and proactive approach, and the measurement of Weltanschauungen via questionnaires indicated that the majority shared this purpose and direction.

**Case Study 2:**

YES: To implement a full professional library service to meet client needs.

**e) Innovative and stimulating:**

**Case Study 1:**

To some degree: Again, only in two of the four branches.

**Case Study 2:**

Yes: Innovations had been introduced, via new technology and as coping mechanisms in the face of resource constraints. There was also some very lateral-thinking ideas generated at the gap analysis and survey analysis stages of the SSM process.

**f) Effective managerial-judiciary/legal relations (Pettigrew's attribute was "managerial-clinical")**

**Case Studies 1 and 2:**

YES: No effort was spared to manage these relationships, and given the environment, could be considered effective (ie the history meant that at that point in time this could not be an "equal" partnership in terms of power and status, just as in the managerial-clinical relationship in Pettigrew's work).

**7.4.5 Cooperative inter-organisational networks**

**Case Study 1:**

YES: Good relationships were maintained with groups external to Corporate Services, but with a view to not diverting resources unnecessarily (eg by becoming too entwined in central agency issues).

**Case Study 2:**

YES: Both within librarianship and law.

**7.4.6 Simplicity and clarity of goals and priorities**

**Case Study 1:**

YES: The pre-workshop interviews indicated that most participants in all branches had a clear and a relatively consistent view of what had to be achieved, with what priority.

**Case Study 2:**

YES: Based on the ethos of professional librarianship.

#### **7.4.7 Participative approach to defining cultural change (Smith, 1986)**

##### **Case Study 1:**

YES: As evidence by the degree of participation actively encouraged in the review.

##### **Case Study 2:**

To some degree: Staff shortages had historically limited this participation, and also impacted on the review.

#### **7.4.8 Conclusions**

Pettigrew et al emphasised that the factors are not meant to be a shopping list, and that they are inevitably interrelated. They use the factors to understand relative performance in introducing change in different NHS districts, and do not attempt to rank statistically the responses to the criteria.

Pettigrew's philosophy has been followed, however, the results of the responses attributed to each question have been indicated, ie.

If every component of every characteristic is considered:

Case Study 1 had 10 Yes responses, 2 No responses, and 5 To Some Degree responses,

Case Study 2 had 8 Yes responses, 1 No response, and 8 To Some Degree responses.

In conclusion, depending on the reliability of the responses, there is an indication that Case Study 2 participants were slightly less receptive to change than was the case in Case Study 1. For the libraries the indications that change could be successfully achieved are especially supported by the strong goals, direction and values resulting from the professional ethos of librarianship. The limiting factor is the history of conflict between the two library groups, and this is significant because the new

direction requires strong cooperation; however, there were indications from the SSM process that this conflict was being broken down.

Overall, with no similar analysis to develop a broad range of comparisons to other organisations, and without over-rationalising the results, there is an indication that Corporate Services is an organisation that is receptive to organisational change.

Two further considerations are added to support this view:

Firstly, the researcher has carried out similar consultancy projects for many WA government organisations over the past ten years, and would support that given that wide range of organisations, CLD could be considered an organisation relatively more adaptive to change than many others.

Secondly, Wilkins and Ouchi (1983, p 479) state in relation to cultural change that:

“when people believe that they will be treated fairly and that if they are honest, they will have time to learn a new paradigm they seem to be quite willing to experiment with new ideas”.

This is significant to the CLD case studies, and especially the Corporate Services review, since on a number of occasions the project sponsor emphasised to all staff that no-one would be made redundant as a result of the review, and that achievement of outcomes would be a staged process to allow time for reskilling. This further supports the view that CLD was an organisations where success could be achieved in introducing cultural change.

## **7.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSIONS**

While recognising the complexity of cultural analysis, this chapter has assisted the applicability of this research to other organisations and projects by identifying the concepts of culture and organisations which underpin this research, by providing an analysis of the culture of the case study organisations, and by attempting an evaluation of the comparative receptiveness of these organisations to cultural change. The generisability of the research is further assisted by Chapter 8 which provides an

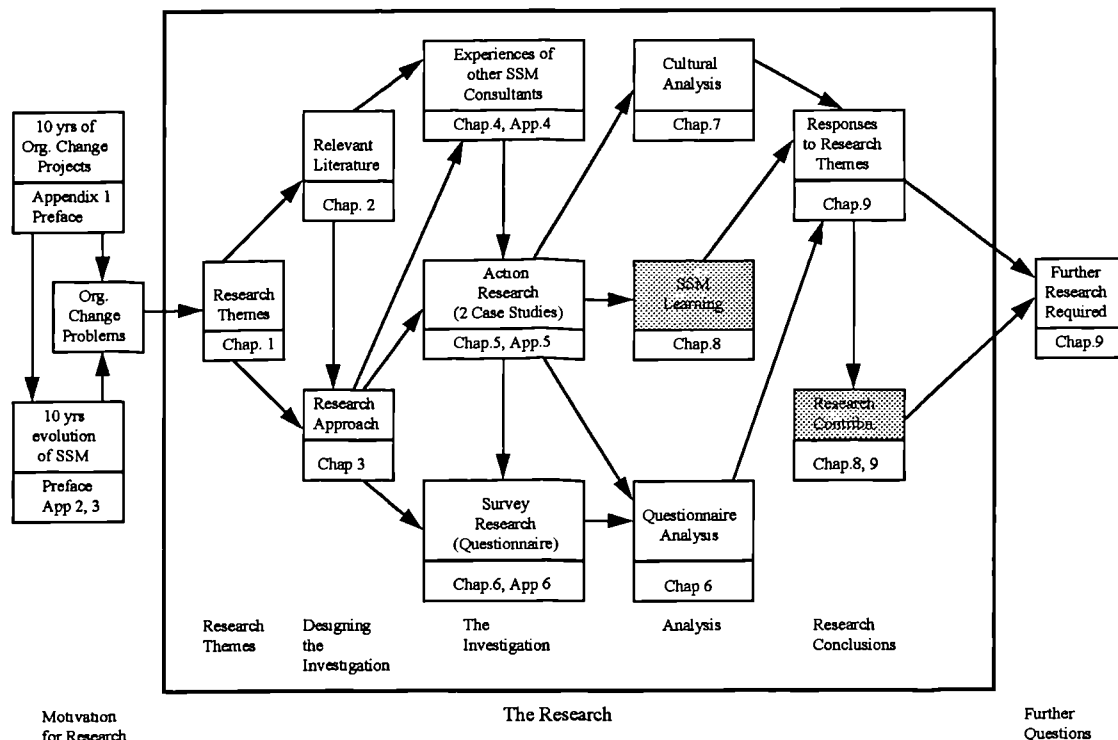


analysis of systems learning and contribution from an SSM perspective, using as input the cultural analysis of this chapter.

## CHAPTER 8

### SYSTEMS LEARNING and CONTRIBUTION

Map of the Structure of the Thesis



### 8.1 INTRODUCTION

Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) is essentially a learning system, an approach which “continually learns and adapts in response to its interactions with a problem” (Atkinson and Checkland, 1988 p 711). There is a long tradition of the methodology evolving based on action research.

“Systems ideas would be the basis of project thinking and the systems projects themselves, as well as seeking practical improvements in the problem situation, would provide a growing body of experience which ought to be a source both of insight into systems ideas and methodology for using systems concepts. ✓ (Checkland, 1981 p 151)

In this chapter this philosophy is applied to learn from the action research carried out, from a systems perspective, and hence test and extend the theory of SSM. In addition, documentation of this analysis will provide deeper understanding of how SSM was used for the action research, giving further context and ability to generalise

from the responses to the research themes in relation to SSM's contribution to cultural change in organisations.

The analysis is presented from the perspective of:

- The approach to using SSM (Mode 1 and Mode 2)
- The stream of cultural analysis,
- The logic-based stream of analysis.

## **8.2 THE APPROACH TO USING SSM: MODE 1 AND MODE 2**

The analysis is presented from the perspective of theoretical analysis, systems learning and research contribution.

### **8.2.1 Theoretical Analysis**

Checkland and Scholes (1990, p 281) have identified a spectrum of modes of using SSM from Mode 1 (the stage by stage application of methodology) to Mode 2 (internal mental use). The case studies represented a mix of Mode 1 and Mode 2.

The Mode 1 perspective of the work undertaken is represented by the fact that the case studies were defined studies which were carried out using SSM. The predefined agreement on the SSM steps which would be used, expressed in business language, was embodied in the project plan for each case study. As the projects progressed these various steps were completed, and indeed, they were similar to Checkland's original seven step SSM process. To this extent the case studies represented doing a project using Mode 1 SSM.

However, the specific problems encountered in the case studies caused the Mode 2 perspective to be introduced, although it might be that only the facilitator was experiencing this difference, and especially since methodology was not formally taught or discussed within the project. It could be expected that the participants were almost

entirely focussing on the problem content system, to the exclusion of the problem solving system. The problems which caused the Mode 2 thinking were different in each case study.

For Case Study 1, the Corporate Services Review, there was no external pressure for change, and no perceived business problem to solve. Rather the sponsor (Glen Coffey, the executive in charge of Corporate Services) had thought it a good idea to review the role and activities of Corporate Services since every other area of CLD had been reviewed, and he needed to consider whether the outcomes of these reviews required a change in focus for Corporate Services, although no indication of this had been identified so far. It may simply have been that this review was required to be done to complete CLD's programme of organisational reviews, or to ensure that other areas did not feel that Corporate Services was being favoured in some way by being shielded from the review process.

Further, no real business problem emerged in the organisational analysis and synthesis phase. Therefore when an attempt was made to define relevant human activity systems with specific Weltanschauungen, a confusing range of 17 potential root definitions was generated, but no manageable number of alternatives which could be debated and modelled emerged. The approach therefore became much more Mode 2 in using SSM as a means of searching for appropriate Weltanschauungen. Models were “played” with, using them to focus on the performance evaluation activity, ie what Checkland and Scholes (1990, p 288) represent as the 5 Es . In the workshops the researcher constantly asked questions such as:

- What value will we be adding to CLD by existing as Corporate Services, in comparison to there being no Corporate Services?
- How can we justify our existence? If we were the owners setting up a new CLD what would we expect to get in return for the money we spend on Corporate Services?
- How will we know if we are successful? Is it enough to know our clients are happy? What if the clients do not know what services to ask for? How do we know what services to offer?

This debate was a constant struggle for two reasons. Firstly, the starting Weltanschauungen all revolved around a very unspecific “provide services” with no real means of measuring performance. Secondly, many of the participants were very uneasy about being accountable for any “bottom line” results, probably because of the limitations of their influence given the perceived power and real autonomy of some of their clients (eg the judiciary and senior lawyers in programme manager roles).

The researcher could have given up on this push to rethink Weltanschauungen, but was encouraged by the sponsor and some of the participants who believed it was essential to add value and be truly accountable (plus there were external government pressures for accountability). However, the researcher’s role at this stage does indicate the influence of the facilitator in terms of final outcomes.

During the modelling phase ideas about a changed role began to emerge but were still not specific enough for the Working Party to be able to arrive at a manageable range of potentially relevant Weltanschauungen, although this was attempted. It appeared that this was not so much that the new Weltanschauung was not forming in the minds of many participants, but that they did not have the skill to mould it into a root definition, and the researcher did not want to lead by providing one, either in a workshop, or as an overnight/back-room exercise; nor was it considered appropriate to convene a special meeting of the sponsors and key managers to resolve the problem. A root definition could have been developed if such a meeting had been held, but this was contrary to the participative, shared decision-making ethos of the project.

Therefore, the researcher allowed the project to move into gap analysis, and organisational change activities were explored as a way of firming up a shared understanding of Weltanschauungen. Thus, the last output of the SSM process was the root definition. The researcher waited until it emerged spontaneously. Two or three were debated and one definition was agreed upon quickly, and appeared to have wide participant approval.

This aspect of the process had been Mode 2, using SSM as a framework of ideas to learn about a real-life situation.

A similar situation emerged in Case Study 2, but not in relation to Weltanschauungen. Here the problem related to the deep-seated conflict between the two library groups, which was vested in the long and troubled history of the problem situation, rather than in interpersonal incompatibilities. In the case study this conflict was manifested in the hostile undercurrents between the two groups when they played the role of workshop participants (with undercurrents flaring on one occasion into open anger, aggression and frustration, vented both against each other and, to some extent, against the managers who were Working Party members ).

There was strong external pressure to resolve this problem - not only the dissatisfaction of some powerful clients, but perhaps an even more pressing dilemma in that the government would not provide the required funding for one of the library groups until they were satisfied that funding was justified. To do this it was necessary to resolve the problems of duplication and inefficiency created by history and the hostility between the two groups.

Once the researcher had managed to reduce the open hostility in the workshops (by stopping the workshop process, talking about workshop behaviour and reaching agreement about appropriate ways of communicating), the participants progressed relatively quickly through the SSM process using a Mode 1 approach. CATWOE was debated, root definition were developed and a generic model was used as the basis for deciding organisational change, and yet it was clear that neither the researcher, sponsor or participants felt confident that the most pressing problem had been resolved - the conflict between the two library groups.

There was therefore a move more into Mode 2 thinking, and using the learning which had occurred in the Mode 1 analysis, plus the results of a client needs survey, the participants debated in a relatively unstructured way for each aspect of the library activities:

- What are we trying to achieve (based on the learning in Mode 1 about Weltanschauungen, models and gaps)?
- What range of alternatives do we have to address this, assuming that we have no limitations of history?
- Which is the most feasible of these alternatives?

The outcome was the decision to introduce a way of working together which overcame the conflicts of the past. SSM had been used as a framework for the researcher and participants to learn their way through this problem, in Mode 2.

### **8.2.2 The Learning Experience**

Whilst the initial approach to a business consultancy project may be to apply Mode 1 SSM, the addition of Mode 2 thinking is a useful way to address problems which occur during the project and have the potential to reduce the effectiveness of the outcomes of the Mode 1 analysis.

### **8.2.3 The Contribution**

The two case study projects have tested, in real business projects, Checkland and Scholes' (1990) concept of a mix of Mode 1 and 2 use of SSM, and extended the theory of situations where Mode 2 may be of value. Specifically, in the case study projects Mode 2 use arose spontaneously in response to problems in real business projects. The researcher was not familiar with the concept of Mode 2 SSM, and had not designed this perspective into the business project or the action research. On analysing the thinking process of the projects, and comparing this with the SSM thinking of Checkland and Scholes (*ibid*), it was discovered that unconsciously Mode 2 use of SSM had been introduced.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the theory of Mode 2, as defined by Checkland and Scholes, has been tested and found useful in a real business environment. The application of Mode 2 thinking was in combination with Mode 1 use of SSM. In addition, the case studies extended theory by identifying two contexts in which Mode 2 was found valuable:

1. When there is no perceived business problem, and therefore difficulty arises in defining alternative Weltanschauungen.
2. When a history of conflict in a problem situation has not been overcome by applying Mode 1 use of SSM.

### **8.3 THE APPROACH TO USING SSM: CULTURAL STREAM**

Checkland and Scholes (1990, p 29) have identified two streams of analysis occurring within an SSM project. The first, considered here, is the stream of cultural analysis which involves understanding of the intervention, the social system, and the political system. The second, (discussed in Section 9.4) is the logic-based stream which encompasses the thinking related to development of holons (models) of human activity systems as a basis for identifying feasible and desirable changes to improve a problem situation.

This perspective of the framework of SSM was not part of the design of the system to use SSM in Case Studies 1 and 2, but has been introduced as a means to enquire theoretically about the case studies, and hence identify learning.

Analysis 1, 2 and 3 of the cultural stream are evaluated below in relation to the case studies:



### 8.3.1 Analysis 1: Analysis of the Intervention

Analysis 1 involves defining the intervention in terms of the roles of client, would-be problem solver and problem owner (*ibid* p 47).

In both case studies the formal project roles, defined in the project plans, were held by the Steering Committee, Working Party, Project Manager, Client Representatives and Facilitator.

The researcher had mentally recognised Glen Coffey as project sponsor, meaning instigator of the review and the person with the power to provide the formal leadership and resources to ensure the review could be completed.

Using the Analysis 1 framework:

- The role of Client (person who caused the study to happen) rested with Glen Coffey.
- The role of Problem Solver (person who wishes to do something about the situation) also belonged to Glen Coffey.
- The role of Problem Owner left more choice since Checkland and Scholes (*ibid*, p 47) state that no one is intrinsically Problem Owner, and that this is a decision to be made by the Problem Solver.

In retrospect the researcher believes that in both case studies the problem solver, Glen Coffey, began by placing ownership with the clients of Corporate Services, i.e. meet clients' needs. The focus shifted throughout the project to an inward ownership, i.e. Corporate Services, as human activity systems were developed which would justify Corporate Services' existence. Eventually the focus moved to CLD (the wider organisation) whose core task, the administration of justice, would be improved by the

activities of Corporate Services. The same situation was true of the Library Services review.

### **8.3.2 Analysis 2: Social System Analysis**

This involves analysis of three interrelated cultural aspects - roles, norms and values<sup>\*</sup>. The analysis continues throughout the entire SSM process and recognises that each aspect is continually redefined. Importantly, the social system analysis should always be regarded as incomplete (*ibid* p 49).

The analysis of the culture of the case study organisations, presented in Chapter 7, has assisted the evaluation of roles, norms and values presented below. The viewpoints expressed have been confirmed as valid by the project sponsor.

From the researcher's perspective, for Case Study 1 an appreciation of norms (behaviours) was necessary before roles and values could be understood. The norms were promulgated by a close group of senior people within Corporate Services. The norms related to working together in a friendly, harmonious, team-spirited way to achieve successes in delivering appropriate services to clients, and especially to meet the priorities of the most powerful client groups.

Based on this, the roles which were recognised as important were those that fitted within the concept of the senior team and its wider network, or family, of supporters. These roles were not based on professional or academic qualifications, or on rank in the organisation, but on successes achieved in the workplace which reinforced the values. Typically the roles involved depth of knowledge of the judicial/legal environment, but this was not exclusively the case and newcomers who demonstrated "fit" could quickly take on a role which was considered important.

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<sup>\*</sup> Role: "A social position recognised as significant by people in the problem situation."

Norm: "A role is characterised by expected behaviours in it, or norms."

Values: "Actual performance in a role will be judged according to local standards, or values."  
(Checkland and Scholes, 1991, p 49)

The values included a belief in the importance to society of the judicial system, and hence respectful acceptance of the power and status accorded to senior people within this system (judges and senior CLD lawyers). This led to a strong set of client service values since these power-brokers were the clients of Corporate Services.

These roles, norms and values of the primary culture had a profound effect on Case Study 1 for two reasons. Firstly, the promulgators of the roles, norms and values were members of the Working Party and played a very active role in driving the thinking and learning of the SSM process. Secondly, in choosing an organisation whose roles, norms and values the researcher respected, the researcher, in playing the part of facilitator, was also likely to reinforce them, although unconsciously, despite attempts to be unbiased. Mingers (1980, p 48) identified the potential for this problem by criticising the conservative way SSM had been used, “legitimizing and preserving the Weltanschauung of a particular group of people - those in positions of power and authority”. This view has also been reinforced by Jackson (1982, 1983) and Rosenhead (1984).

For Case Study 2 the managers from Corporate Services brought to the project the same roles, norms and values as for Case Study 1. However, a second group, the librarians, brought a different perspective. Their values were the same in relation to the judicial environment, but the role was embedded in the professionalism, ethics and ethos of librarianship, and more particularly law librarianship. Formal academic library education and length of service in law librarianship were important aspects of the role, as well as personal goodwill with powerful clients. The norms were those behaviours which created and reinforced professional credibility - to be very serious about the role, to appear knowledgeable and efficient, and always to be able to meet the client's expectations, and especially where the client held a senior role in the judicial system.

Again, the outcomes indicate, perhaps even more strongly than in Case Study 1, that the SSM process reinforced these roles, norms and values. In this case, although Glen Coffey was still in the role of client and problem solver, he and the management team admitted to having little understanding of librarianship and deferred, to some extent, to

the professional knowledge of the librarians when action plans (ie organisational change strategies) were decided. Add to this the fact that the researcher's background includes qualifications in librarianship, and hence the theoretical base of the discipline is valued, one can understand the researcher's disappointment at the limited way the discipline has tended to be applied to help organisations to be more successful. Thus, again, though unconsciously, the researcher's bias could have been reinforcing the roles and values, if not the norms (behaviours) of the librarians.

### **8.3.3 Analysis 3: Political System Analysis**

This analysis aims to develop an understanding of the political dimensions of the problem situation by identifying how power is expressed. Again the cultural analysis presented in Chapter 7 has assisted this evaluation.

In Case Study 1 the researcher perceived power to be expressed by informal membership of the senior management network (or family). The one-to-one pre-workshop interviews at the start of this case study made it clear that people in Corporate Services knew who had membership.

Significantly, the majority of the Working Party members appeared to be part of this network, or wider family. This may have been an indication that the majority of people in Corporate Services were members, or, perhaps that the Working Party was not representative of the whole Corporate Services community. The fact that they were chosen, or volunteered, meant most of them could have been expected to belong. It was considered whether this had the implication that the proposed organisational changes might not be accepted by the wider Corporate Services community. However, it was decided that the Working Party group would inevitably be the change catalysts, and that the rest of the community were given an opportunity to participate in the review, even if indirectly. However, Jackson's (1993) viewpoint would probably suggest that this is further evidence of SSM reinforcing the status quo.

Commodities of power which provided entry to the “family” included elements of personal charisma, mateship, knowledge base, creative thinking ability, and past workplace successes.

For Case Study 2 power was expressed in terms of rank, position and personal acceptance in the library and legal worlds, both within CLD and the courts, and beyond.

#### **8.3.4 The Learning Experience**

The interviews with UK SSM practitioners (Appendix 4), selected on the basis of their reputation in the SSM and/or academic worlds, led the researcher to conclude that for SSM projects the facilitators and clients tend to select each other based on trust and shared values. These shared values will at least encompass a view of the problem situation and how it should be approached, but may be even wider than this. The researcher’s reflections on a number of client relationships in other organisations reinforce this view (despite formal tendering and selection procedures which may be in place to select consultants).

Significantly, the researcher’s choice as facilitator for Case Study 2 was for all the same reasons as for Case Study 1 (ie trust and past working relationships), plus the added fact that the researcher has a degree in librarianship and therefore would be acceptable to the library participants who were hesitant about commencing the review and, to some extent, could bring in powerful backing from their judicial and senior legal clients if they were unhappy with the approach to the review.

From this basis SSM can be a powerful tool to reinforce the client’s values, despite, as in Case Study 1, the client/problem solver genuinely stating that there was no predetermined solutions for the project, and despite the attempts of the researcher to display no bias.

In this situation, unless the client/problem solver desires to change radically the Weltanschauungen (as appeared to be the case in one of Scholes' studies discussed in the interview with him - see Appendix 4), then it is unlikely that dramatic shifts in culture will occur, and hence the process could be regarded as conservative.

In both case studies the SSM process had resulted in agreed changes in behaviour/norms (how things would be done), some shift in role, but no deep changes in broad values.

### **8.3.5 The Contribution**

The case studies have resulted in testing and further developing the theory of Mingers (eg 1980), Jackson (eg 1982) and Rosenhead (1984) regarding the conservative use of SSM. Specifically:

- The two-way choice which occurs when client and facilitator select each other is likely to be based, to some degree, on shared values.
- This is likely to result in a reinforcement of existing values unless the client believes a radical value shift should occur.

In terms of the case studies, the researcher does not believe that this is necessarily a weakness of SSM, as effective organisational change may be identified by strengthening and extending the roles, norms and values. This was the potential outcome of the case studies, even though the organisational changes could not be implemented immediately, as planned due to the CLD ceasing to exist. However, the majority of participants in the SSM processes believed the appropriate new role had been identified (See Chapter 6, Analysis of Questionnaires). Nevertheless, it is important that this aspect of SSM is recognised and considered when planning the use of SSM, in Mode 1 or 2.

In terms of the criticisms of SSM by Jackson (1982) and Rosenhead (1984), if an imbalance of power had limited genuine discussion amongst Working Party members, and thus prevented real agreement on direction, this was not expressed by the majority of participants when given the opportunity in the anonymous post project questionnaires. (Questionnaire responses are presented in full in Appendix 6).

#### **8.4 LOGIC-BASED STREAM OF ANALYSIS**

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the logic-based stream encompasses the steps within the SSM process. From this perspective, this research has resulted in contributions to the Organisational Analysis & Synthesis and the Conceptual Modelling phases of SSM.

The detailed discussions explaining the contribution are provided in Appendix 2 (adaptation of the methodology) and Appendix 5 (the case studies).

##### **8.4.1 Organisational Analysis and Synthesis (to use Galliers' 1985 term)**

###### **a) Theoretical Analysis/Learning Experience**

Checkland and Scholes (1990, p 31) begin the logic-based stream of analysis with the choice of relevant systems (ie CATWOE and root definition phase), and state that if the user already knows a great deal about the situation he can go directly into the logic-based stream. However, if an external team is involved they will need to do some finding out via the cultural stream (ie Analysis 1, 2 and 3 as discussed above).

The researcher identified a different dilemma in conducting many business consultancy SSM projects over a ten year period, including the case studies. Having decided that a truly participative approach meant that all decisions were

made in a group setting (workshops), some techniques were required to cause the project participants to think creatively about the future. Otherwise it was found that debating CATWOE could be very hard work, with participants who were not trained in SSM inclined to define the current situation, or slight derivations of it. This tended to bog down the workshop process from the start, and perhaps lead to the temptation for the facilitator to provide the solutions. Even if the participants knew their organisation the facilitator needs some way quickly to start them on the project's learning curve (ie the participants need to learn as much about potential futures as does the facilitator).

In addition, when (as in Case Study 1) the researcher involved the entire organisation by linking non members of workshops to workshop members as a vehicle for everyone to provide input and feedback to the SSM thinking, the researcher encountered the problem that if the workshop members were not already on the learning curve and thinking creatively, it was difficult for them to facilitate this thinking in others.

Therefore, in business projects over a number of years, the researcher experimented with techniques in workshops to extend thinking and as a result started to introduce debate on the following questions:

- What are the external issues which will have a significant impact over the next, say, 3 to 5 years? (or whatever timeframe was appropriate to the study).

*This made participants think beyond their boundary, and think futures.*

- How well are we placed now to meet those issues and challenges, in terms of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities threats?



*This introduced the concept that we may need to change some things, perhaps dramatically, but that we have some things in our favour.*

- What are our values, and what changes would we like? This was probed via questions such as:

How would we like to be able to describe our team members? What values need more work?

How would we like our clients to describe us? What values need more work?

*This was to break down the 'harder' technical thinking and bring in consideration of culture.*

These workshop rules and structured brainstorming techniques (see description in Case Study 1, Appendix 5) were developed to encourage full participation. However, there were still two major problems. Firstly, the facilitator usually had scant knowledge of the culture to guide the facilitation, and secondly, many participants were hesitant to share their viewpoints.

The researcher's response to this was to experiment with one-to-one interviews before the workshops began to build empathy, extend the thinking of the participants, and allow both facilitator and participants to learn about the culture. For although the participant is answering the facilitator's cultural questions, in doing so the participant was reflecting on the culture and learning from the experience. The structure of these interviews was developed further for Case Study 1 (in comparison to the researcher's previous work) in order to arrive at the more comprehensive and deeper cultural debate which was necessary to meet the design of this research.

In many projects the researcher noticed a dramatic improvement in quality and quantity of input at the first workshop in those projects where pre-workshop interviews had taken place.

The importance of pre-workshop interviews (although not with structured questions to identify culture) was also highlighted by Atkinson, Haynes and Cole in the consultant interviews (Appendix 4). Until these interviews occurred this researcher was not aware that other SSM consultants were using this approach.

## **b) The Contribution**

The contribution from the research extends the understanding of the use of SSM by the introduction of an inter-linked group of techniques, ie:

- Use of pre-workshop interviews based on structured questions to identify culture.
- Use of the facilitator role and workshops to ensure all stages of the SSM process are carried out by the users, not for the users, maximising user learning and ownership.
- Linking people in the wider problem situation community to workshop members in order to participate, though indirectly, in the learning experience.
- Workshop techniques to explore organisational analysis and synthesis, including structured brainstorming to identify issues, values and SWOT, in order to stimulate creative thinking and a futures focus.
- Participant feedback on these items to validate their importance, ie:

Questionnaire results indicated that identification of issues was the most significant step of the SSM process in terms of redefining role (Weltanschauungen). 95% of participants gave this a "1" (critical) rating. SWOT had a 85% response of "1", while 68% considered the

use of workshops critical. The participants saw less benefit in the discussion of values, with only a 43% "1" (critical) response.

#### **8.4.2 Activity Models**

##### **a) Theoretical Analysis**

Activity models are pictorial representations of human activity systems and as such should incorporate the specific characteristics of systems, ie systems' boundary, external environment, connectivity within the system (resulting in the system exhibiting behaviour), the ability of the system to survive, emergence, hierarchy, communication and control. Yet, by following the examples in the SSM literature, graduate university students in the researcher's SSM classes frequently drew models which were closer to flow charts than systems models. The researcher realised if students were confused, then this confusion was also likely to be causing some problems for participants in business projects. The researcher therefore considered how the SSM modelling technique could be evolved to be more obviously systemic and arrived at the template and set of rules to validate the construction of activity models. (See Appendix 2, Adaptation of SSM for a more detailed description.)

##### **b) The Contribution**

This work was carried out and tested prior to this research, but further testing, with feedback from participants (via questionnaire) was part of the case studies. Examples of the resultant models are shown as part of the explanation of the case studies in Appendix 5. The contribution therefore is in the category of extension of theory in the following specific areas:

- Use of a template as a basis for starting to develop activity models in workshops.

- Introduction of rules for developing activity models, ie:

1. All activities must have an input and output. These inputs and outputs may be from and to the external environment.  
(This rule is to ensure connectivity of all subsystems.)

*Note: This contrasts with Checkland and Scholes' (1990) models, eg p 38, where not all activities have inputs. I have found that this evades the question, "What are the inputs to this subsystem?", which is often insightful, as well as causing difficulties when continuing to use the models for information analysis since there is no indication from where the information inputs should emanate.*

2. Every model must have a feedback loop (usually an evaluation activity) to ensure continuity of the system, and this is drawn within the system boundary so that it is clearly depicted as an integral sub-system. The evaluation activity should be expressed to answer the question, "How will we know if we are successful?" and should directly denote the Weltanschauungen (and the emergent properties).

(This is in the context of the "primary task" use of SSM and is to ensure that the model represents a system with continuity, ie the ability to survive.)

*Again this is in contrast to Checkland and Scholes (ibid, p38) where the demonstration model is drawn with the evaluation activities outside the main system boundary. The researcher's work in numerous projects had shown that there is a tendency for participants to overlook the evaluation activity in their gap analysis and information analysis unless it is shown as a sub-system linked to other sub-systems within a single system boundary.*

3. The model must have a boundary and some external interactions.

*(In order to depict the concept of an open system interacting with an external environment, and to capture the "E" of CATWOE.)*

In addition, the verb "know" when starting an activity usually means this is not a system but an input to another system, ie the transformation process of "not knowing" to "knowing" is not usually very helpful. The use of "know" to describe an activity appears frequently in the literature (eg Wilson 1989 p 188, Watson 1992 p 425). The problems associated with using "know" were highlighted by Woodburn (1985, p 103) in reference to a fire brigade system:

... the somewhat passive nature of the activity "Know locally determined standards" which implies an input of information "Local standards" from a relatively more active element, or sub-system, outside the system being modelled.

## 8.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter is significant to the research in bringing together the learning and contribution from an SSM perspective, as well as adding to the understanding of the

context in which the research findings were derived, thus contributing to the ability to generalise from the research results. Checkland and Scholes' (1991) revised view of SSM provided a valuable framework within which to carry out this analysis.

Conclusion from this chapter are:

- The action research tested, in real business projects, the mix of Mode 1 and 2 use of SSM and found this approach to be useful. In addition, use of Mode was found to be valuable in two situations:
  - When there is no perceived business problem, and therefore difficulty in defining alternative Weltanschauungen as a basis for achieving organisational change.
  - When a history of conflict in a problem situation has not been overcome by applying Mode 1 use of SSM.
- SSM project facilitators and clients tend to select each other based on trust and shared values and this can lead to the SSM project reinforcing the client's values, despite the client genuinely stating that there is no predetermined solutions for the project, and despite the facilitator's attempt to display no bias. In this situation unless the client desires to change radically the Weltanschauung, then it is unlikely that dramatic shifts in culture will occur, and hence the process could be regarded as conservative.
- An inter-linked group of techniques have been introduced and tested by the researcher, in this research and many other consultancy projects, to strengthen the participative approach to using SSM. These techniques are: pre-workshop interviews based on structured questions; use of the facilitator role and workshops to ensure all stages of the SSM process are carried out by the users, not for the users; workshop techniques to explore organisational analysis and synthesis.

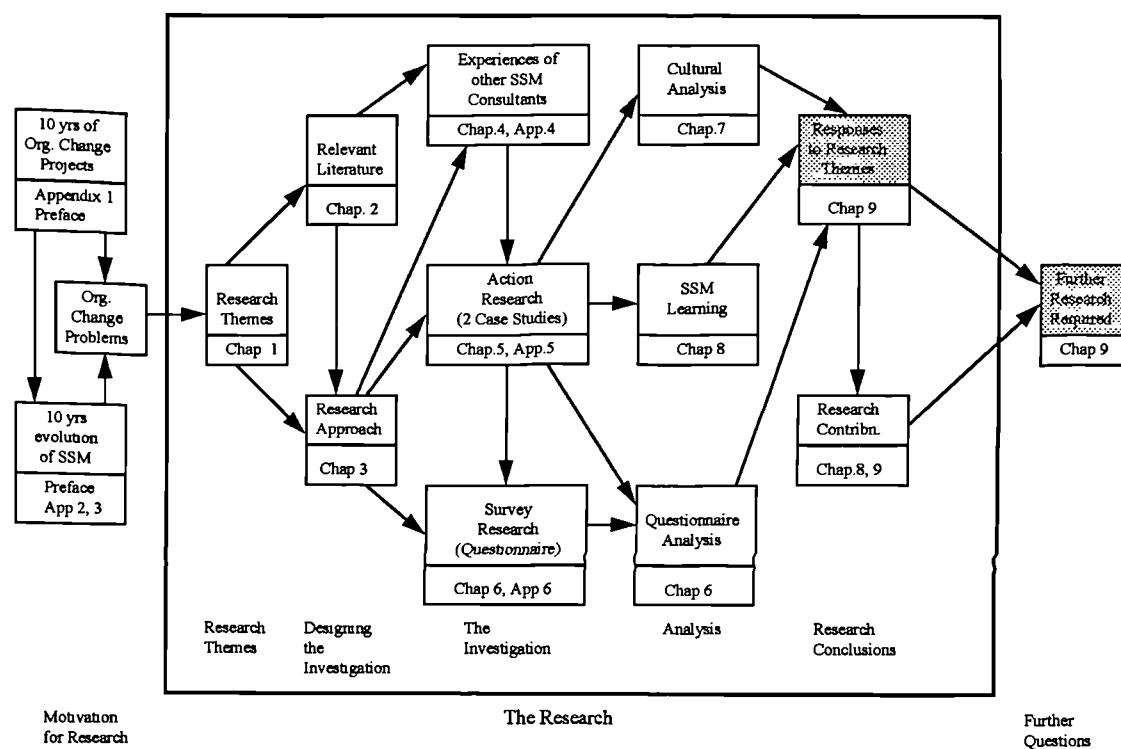
- Formal feedback by the participants in an SSM project was achieved and identified from their perspective the usefulness of techniques introduced into the SSM process, as stated above.
- Use of a template and rules to guide the development of activity models was tested.

Chapter 9 brings together this, and all other analysis, to develop research findings and areas for further research.

## CHAPTER 9

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

Map of the Structure of the Thesis



### 9.1 INTRODUCTION

In the researcher's experience, many people in today's organisations are concerned that the pace and magnitude of change are having negative impacts. In the Western Australian public sector, where the researcher has had ten years' experience with organisational change projects, the push to be more client oriented, commercial, productive or cost effective has led to these organisations changing their roles and being restructured, decentralised, corporatised, amalgamated or downsized. These initiatives often require a fundamental shift in attitudes, values and behaviour, ie change in organisational culture. The people within the organisations, including management, are expressing their concerns that low morale, loss of productivity or lower client service, are the undesirable outcomes of this organisational change.



The researcher and other Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) practitioners believe that SSM can help to overcome these problems and achieve more effective organisational change. Numerous publications describe how the consultant and/or project sponsor believe SSM projects have been successful. This research was motivated by concerns that firstly, the published research did not show whether the SSM project had achieved cultural change; secondly, whether the participants in the project, who inevitably would be the change agents, believed the change had occurred; and third, if such change had been achieved, what factors had contributed. As SSM researchers and practitioners, unless we are able to gain an insight into these three issues, then our ability to constantly improve the use of SSM towards more effective organisational change will be limited.

To address this research motivation three statements were made as the basis for questioning and drawing conclusions to test and extend the theory of SSM:

1. Participants in an SSM project may achieve changes in Weltanschauungen\*, and such shifts can be identified.
2. Not all participants in an SSM project will have the same pre-project Weltanschauung, or the same changed Weltanschauung at the conclusion of the project. However, sufficient similarity of change will occur in a number of the participants to indicate cultural change has occurred (ie a group sharing of new values.)
3. Specific factors relating to how an SSM project was carried out can be identified as significant to the changes in Weltanschauungen which occurred.

Action research was decided as the most appropriate approach to evaluate these statements and two SSM projects were carried out (the case studies). An understanding of participants' pre-project culture was obtained in interviews, while changes in Weltanschauungen, and contributing factors, were probed in post-project questionnaires (with 100% response rate). To assist the learning, interviews were also conducted with other SSM practitioners/researchers to understand their experiences in

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\* A stated assumption was that, where a primary task approach is used, changes in the Weltanschauungen of participants in an SSM project are indications of a change in organisational culture.

organisational change projects. The information and experiences gained throughout the research were evaluated in the preceding chapters, ie:

- Chapter 5, the process of achieving changes in Weltanschauungen throughout the case studies.
- Chapter 6, the participants' (and sponsor's) perspectives, as expressed in the questionnaires.
- Chapter 7, the extent to which the culture of the case study organisations was receptive to change.
- Chapter 8, systems learning and contribution.

This chapter synthesises all of the preceding analysis, evaluates each research theme, presents the interpretation of the research findings, and identifies areas for further research.

## **9.2. RESEARCH THEME 1:**

**Participants in an SSM project may achieve changes in Weltanschauungen, and such shifts can be identified.**

Each case study is analysed and conclusions are presented:

### **9.2.1 Case Study 1, Corporate Services**

This theme was tested in the anonymous questionnaire completed by all workshop participants. The questions asked were:

- Please state **in your own words** what you believe was the **ROLE** of Corporate Services immediately before the Review.
- Please state **in your own words** what you believe is the new **ROLE** of Corporate Services, ie after the Review. ✓

During the case study the word “role” had been used instead of Weltanschauung, in the search for a specific and meaningful description of why Corporate Services should exist (ie not in the strict use of the word “role” in the context of roles, norms and values as the three components of culture.)

The project sponsor's and the researcher's responses were separately identified.

The analysis of the questionnaires indicated:

- The responses of 16 of the 21 participants showed that a shift in Weltanschauungen had occurred and could be expressed.
- The sponsor and researcher both expressed a shift in Weltanschauungen.
- 3 of the participants expressed only a minor change, ie by adding an extra function.
- 1 participant saw no change in role.

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To ensure that the participants believed that the new role for Corporate Services was a relevant role for the future (and that they had not disagreed but failed to express their dissent), a further question was asked in the questionnaire, ie "Do you believe the new Role is the correct Role for Corporate Services?"

18 of the 21 respondents replied "Yes".

The conclusion from the questionnaire was therefore that the majority of participants in Case Study 1 had identified a change in Weltanschauungen.

In an attempt to validate this finding further, the expression of pre-project Role on the questionnaire (which was completed at the end of the project), was compared with the information given in the one-to-one pre-workshop interviews with the researcher some 5 months earlier.

*[The limitation that no direct matching of a single respondent's interview and questionnaire response could be achieved because the questionnaires were anonymous was not considered significant, since in attempting to identify cultural change a shift in group values was being sought.]*

The question asked in the interviews was “Why does your Branch exist?”. The change in asking about “Branch” at the start of the project and “Corporate Services” at the end of the project, was because there was no concept of Corporate Services as a real entity with a purpose before the project. By the end of the project the Corporate Services and Branch roles were essentially the same, except the name of the specific resource area was added to each Branch’s role.

The conclusion was that the majority of the responses in the pre-workshop interviews did correspond with the type of pre-project expression of role in the questionnaire, ie.:

- Verbs used in the interviews were:

Understand, facilitate, provide support, provide advice, provide service, manage, supervise, coordinate, guide, set standards, plan, make sure, control, give direction.

While it is not asserted that there was a single pre-project Weltanschauungen amongst the participants, the majority of these words did relate to aspects of a service culture.

- Verbs used in the questionnaire expression of pre-project role were:

Provide services, optimise, support, help, meet client requirements.

The range of Verbs had reduced and, again, all related to aspects of a service culture.

As a further validation, analysis of the steps within the SSM process for Case Study 1 (based on the researcher’s diary notes, but confirmed by the project sponsor) supported the view that there was an emerging change in Weltanschauungen. (See Chapter 5).

### 9.2.2 Case Study 2, Library Services

With regard to the Case Study 2 questionnaire, responses were obtained from the four librarians.

None of the four expressed a change in the role of Library Services (Weltanschauung), but rather that resources would be available to provide additional services to a wider client base, but still within the broad concept of being a library.

Therefore, for Case Study 2 the preliminary conclusion, based on the questionnaire response, was that no change in Weltanschauungen had occurred.

This conclusion seemed inconsistent because the conceptual models and gap analysis indicated that very significant changes in thinking had occurred in relation to how the Library Services' role would be carried out, eg involvement in strategic planning as an integral part of the wider information resource group, team based delivery of library services at client sites, a *cooperative and integrated approach to library infrastructure* - all aimed at overcoming the barriers, duplication and inefficiencies vested in the history of hostility between the two library groups.

In cultural change terms, the role<sup>†</sup> (ie the strict SSM/cultural use of the term) and values had remained constant, and perhaps been reinforced, but the norms (behaviours) had changed.

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<sup>†</sup> *It could be argued, from the reader's perspective, that the researcher has introduced some confusion into the research by using the word role in two ways - firstly, as an expression of the business purposes of Corporate Services and Library Services, and secondly, in the strict SSM/cultural definition of roles, norms and values. However, this was an outcome of using a real business project where the participants had no knowledge of the research intent, and "role" was their normal business language which had specific meaning for them.*

### 9.3 **RESEARCH THEME 2:**

**Not all participants in an SSM project will have the same pre-project Weltanschauung, or the same changed Weltanschauung at the conclusion of the project. However, sufficient similarity of change will occur in a number of the participants to indicate cultural change has occurred (ie a group sharing of new values.)**

#### 9.3.1 Case Study 1

Evaluation of the researcher's, sponsor's and participants' responses led to the following conclusions:

- Researcher and sponsor showed close similarity in the expression of change in Corporate Services' Role.
- Participants:  
It was decided that to meet the criterion of participants describing a change in Corporate Services' Role which was close to the view of the researcher and sponsor, the answers should move from a less strategic role to a more strategic role, usually in some form of "provide service or support" (before) to "a more proactive role in optimising resources to meet Departmental or client objectives" (after). The results were:
  - There were 9 participant responses which fully met this criterion.
  - A further 7 participants expressed in some way that the role had changed by being extended to focus on meeting client needs in a closer relationship with clients. Thus these 7 were near the views of the researcher and sponsor, but had not taken such a strategic perspective.
  - 4 participants had not expressed clearly a role change.

Therefore, for Case Study 1 there was sufficient similarity of responses to indicate cultural change had occurred (ie a group sharing of new values.) - but only to the extent that Corporate Services' Role expresses Weltanschauung, and Weltanschauung expresses culture as explained below:

Firstly, the very concept of organisational culture is complex, and the literature provides no definitive guidance on how to understand culture and cultural change. The concept encompasses rational and non-rational beliefs and behaviours, both at the level of the individual and the organisation. The existence of sub cultures further complicates the picture. A primary task Weltanschauung expresses the *central purpose* of an organisation. A group change in Weltanschauung can be interpreted to mean that a number of individuals in the organisation have arrived at a new understanding of the role of the organisation, and the associated action plans developed by these individuals can show that they intend to make changes in their roles, values, processes, policies, skills and structure in order to move to the new Weltanschauung. To this extent there is an intent to change some aspects of organisational culture. Other aspects of culture will inevitably remain unchanged or be reinforced, eg myths, legends and rituals based on history and hero figures.

Secondly, as previously identified, culture involves roles, norms and values. It is not necessarily clear from a change in expression of Weltanschauung which of these elements is changing. However, if it is concluded that if any one has changed, then some aspect of cultural change has occurred, this issue is simplified.

It is also important to recognise that only 9 of the 21 participants fully met the criteria for changed Weltanschauung. Scholes, when interviewed by the researcher, indicated that it is important to have one third of the stakeholders fully supporting the change process. If these people then become "evangelists" for the organisational change it is likely that the middle third of participants will join in, but one third may never be convinced. Morgan (1993) also indicates that the change process begins with a small number of individuals. From this perspective, Case Study 1 would appear to have

enough people supporting the change, but clearly there are implications for how to ensure they do become evangelists and do influence the middle third to join in.

### 9.3.2 Case Study 2

As explained, the analysis is based on the views of the researcher and the librarians.

- **Researcher's View:**

The “before” role related to providing basic library services to specific clients, within resource constraints.

The “after” role was to be an integral part of an information resource team, providing strategic information and library services which clearly contribute to the administration of justice in WA

- **Librarians' Views:**

As stated above, the participants did not perceive a major change in role, as indicated by the following “before” and “after” comments on the questionnaire:

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| Before: | To provide legal information to CLD legal and para legal staff and the judiciary.   |
| After:  | The role is essentially unchanged. However there was useful clarification of the role (especially from clients) and resources needed to fulfil this role.   |
| Before: | Provision of library materials within available funding. Limited reference service on request.  |
| After:  | Provision of agreed library materials within a budget. Provision of library services as desired by users and within staffing limitation.  |
| Before: | Providing a specialised library service to Crown lawyers, judiciary, magistracy.  |
| After:  | Given that extra resources can be provided to more adequately meet the needs of the above, and then additional resources provided, to widen this role to include an information service to other Corporate Services sections, and the wider Department. |
| Before: | To provide an efficient and cost effective library service to Judges, Magistrates and Crown lawyers to enable them to meet their objectives.  |
| After:  | As above. However, within sufficient resources should also provide library services to the executive, I.T. and H.R. areas.  |



Therefore the views of the researcher and the librarians did not concur.

The two comments added to Question 3, “Is this the correct role?” (to which all answered Yes), provide further insight:

- “This belief does not stem from the review. It has always been taken as highly desirable - even very uncomfortable that we couldn’t fulfil this role.”
- “On track to developing full library service requirements for the Courts of the State. In time these libraries should be developed and devolved to the bodies they serve (5 year time frame).”

It is therefore concluded that, probably based on their professional training, the librarians had always believed their role was to provide a full range of information services, backed by an appropriate library collection. The problem was that they had never been able to promote and justify this role, and hence had not been resourced to carry it out.

This was a different situation to the Corporate Services review where, in those instances where the participants expressed that it was “how” the role would be implemented which had changed, the issue was not inadequate resources, but a new understanding of what had to be done.

However, for Case Study 2, it is concluded in terms of the research statement that expression of Weltanschauungen, via the questionnaires, did not indicate a group sharing of new values.

#### **9.4     RESEARCH THEME 3:**

**Specific factors relating to how an SSM project was carried out can be identified as significant to the changes in Weltanschauungen which occurred.**

From the perspective of the case studies, these factors were identified in the questionnaires, as shown below. The comments provided by many of the respondents give a richer understanding of the ratings (See Appendix 6).

##### **9.4.1   Case Study 1**

Participants were able to identify the contribution to cultural change by various techniques within the SSM project. In summary, the participants' ranking of "1" (critical) in priority order was:

Identification of issues	95%
Leadership and involvement of senior management	86%
Identification of SWOT	85%
Working with colleagues within the Branch on organisation structure	83%
Input from internal clients	79%
Explanation of the purpose and objectives of the review	75%
The role of the facilitator	75%
Input from external clients	69%
Use of workshops	68%
Enabling all corporate services staff to provide input to the workshops	66%
Discussion of preliminary vision	43%
Learning more about other Corporate Services branches	37%
Personal interviews with the facilitator	35%
Use of key activity models	33%

The biggest surprise for the researcher was the low rating of key activity models. This was unexpected because of the tradition in the SSM literature (reinforced in the UK consultant interviews, Appendix 4) that models can often be the turning point in arriving at new Weltanschauungen. The Case Study 1 participants thought otherwise, despite modelling having been used extensively in the case studies, and highly rated by the project sponsor and researcher. However, it may have been the use of generic models which caused some problems, as indicated by some questionnaire comments. (See Appendix 6).

The high ranking of identification of issues relates to an adaptation of the methodology introduced by the researcher to improve the Organisational Analysis and Synthesis stage. The participant feedback validates the usefulness of this step and its application using structured brainstorming (See Appendix 2).

*[Apart from the general limitations of survey research (eg snapshot in time, little depth), the dependability of the above answers may have been affected by two circumstances. Firstly, in Case Study 1, there was limited time available to complete responses as the questionnaire was administered during a Working Party meeting, ie no time to reflect and revisit the answers. Secondly, there had been no discussion about methodology throughout both case studies, and the researcher had not indicated to the participants during the case studies that they would be asked to complete the questionnaire. It is therefore possible that the respondents had been almost entirely focussed on the problem content system, to the exclusion of the problem solving system, and their responses may be a reflection of the "mood of the moment" when they were completed. However, the problem of little depth in survey research was largely overcome by the wealth of information provided in the comments which many participants added to their responses. ]*

#### 9.4.2 Case Study 2

With only 4 respondents and most questions answered with a “1” (critical) or “2” (useful) response, it appeared that the librarians had an holistic view that all aspects of the SSM process had contributed. The only exception was the question relating to personal interviews with the researcher which were not regarded as particularly important, and this was probably because they had taken a less structured format than in Case Study 1, for business reasons (See Chapter 5, Case Study 2).

### 9.5 INTERPRETATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following discussion interprets and generalises the research findings in order to extend theory regarding the contribution of SSM to cultural change.

*The research findings indicate that the use of SSM can contribute to some aspects of cultural change in organisations, but only where cultural change relates to a change in roles, norms, or values linked to the primary purpose of the organisation. In this context it must be recognised that the concept of organisational culture is much wider than these roles, norms or values, involving rational and non-rational beliefs and behaviours of individuals and groups. The research has not shown that change in Weltanschauungen will impact on the total perspective of organisational culture.*

However, the research did identify, in the context of these two case studies, what aspects of the SSM project, from the researcher, participant and sponsor perspective, contributed either to the success of the project and/or to the change in Weltanschauungen.

However, the reliability of these findings may be open to challenge because of perceptions of problems of lack of rigour in action research. To counter this challenge the research is considered in terms of the quality guidelines for action research

developed by Baskerville and Wood-Harper (1992, pp 10-12) which aim to ensure that such research is both rigorous and relevant:

- **Consideration for the paradigm shift**

This guideline questions whether action research is the appropriate approach for the research question(s), and whether the main body of scientists involved with the topic accept action research (otherwise indepth justification of the research approach will be required).

For this research a precedent had already been established in that the founder of the methodology, Checkland, had chosen and justified action research as the most appropriate approach to advance the theory and practice of SSM. Many SSM action research projects have been undertaken and published. Further, outside the SSM tradition, action research has been considered an appropriate approach for the study of organisations and the introduction of organisational change (Eden and Huxham, 1995). This research is essentially about the introduction of organisational change.

- **Establishment of a formal research agreement**

The requirement here is for the development of a “client-system infrastructure” involving informed consent of the client and the authorisation of the researcher to introduce action within the organisation. It also involves briefing of the client about the experimental nature of the action-taking, and the iterative nature of the learning.

In order to test the research questions in a true business environment, this research deliberately did not meet the criteria for informed consent prior to the project, although this was achieved before writing the thesis. However, potential ethical concerns resulting from lack of disclosure were addressed by carefully negotiating roles and responsibilities of all parties in the project (including the researcher), agreeing the research design, and documenting these as part of the formal project plan. This project plan was then provided to each

workshop participant, and also made available and explained to all staff in the case study organisations (as part of the project launch). The approach was understood by the client to be experimental in that it was the first time a participative SSM project had been undertaken in the case study organisations, and it was emphasised by researcher and client that there were no preconceived solutions. The iterative nature of the project (which is also a key factor in the use of SSM) was emphasised to workshop participants at every workshop.

- **Provision of a theoretical problem statement**

Achieving quality in action research requires that the theoretical foundation upon which the intervention is based is clearly documented in advance of action being taken. Changes to these theoretical underpinnings, resulting from learning experiences during the project, should be carefully documented in the research notebooks.

Theory in relation to organisational culture and SSM was researched and documented, and research themes were formulated, prior to the case studies commencing. The researcher's perspective of the learning and related theoretical considerations was documented as the projects proceeded.

- **Planned measurement methods**

The credibility of the action research depends on rigorous data collection methods. The data must be able to be produced for examination. The measurement approach must be designed and specified in advance of the project commencing.

The measurement approaches used for this research, and included in the research infrastructure were:

- **Structured interviews with SSM practitioners/researchers.**

Detailed notes were taken by the researcher and returned to the interviewees for review and feedback.

- A pre-workshop structured interview with each workshop participant.  
The researcher took detailed notes during the interview. A summary was developed by the researcher and discussed with management.
- Recording of all aspects of the workshop process on an electronic whiteboard, as the workshops were carried out.  
The copies from the whiteboard were provided to participants during the workshops.
- Detailed recording, on computer, of the researcher's perspective of the progress of the action research.
- Use of an anonymous questionnaire to gain participants' views on any change in Weltanschauung which had occurred, and contributing factors.

All source data is able to be produced.

It is important to emphasise that the measurement approach was structured to gather data before, during and after the action research project, ie the pre-workshop interviews (*before*), the whiteboard copies and researcher's diary notes (*during*), and post-project questionnaire and feedback on the thesis from the sponsor (*after*). This is in contrast to the reporting of some SSM action research which appears to rely on post-rationalisation of outcomes.

- **Maintain collaboration and subjective learning**

Collaboration with the client and opportunities for client learning are essential components of the action research cycle. The researcher must avoid dominating the action research and must not assume the authoritative role of the external consultant.

The researcher played the role of facilitator for the workshop sessions. The researcher's facilitation style is to be soft rather than harsh, taking the role of therapist, catalyst and mediator; leading discussion by posing questions, but allowing the participants to debate and decide answers. The researcher's

perception of this style is reinforced by comments about the facilitator made in the post-project questionnaire, ie:

- It was important to have a neutral party (not influenced).
- Role of mediator between Branch and senior management was crucial to success.
- Unbiased 'time-keeper, recorder' allowed a non-personal development of the review.
- Clearly without the facilitator the amount of participation and data obtained would not have resulted.
- Independent views and the fact that no preconceived views were held.

- **Promote iterations**

This guideline relates to the cyclical nature of action research and the need to continue the cycles until the problem situation is improved.

Iteration was a key component of the SSM process used for the case studies. This is especially demonstrated by the situation where, in Case Study 1, no Role (or manageable range of Roles) for Corporate Services could be developed, causing this question of Role to be revisited in numerous workshops. Agreement was only reached in the final workshop. (In this context it is important to emphasise that shared understanding, rather than consensus, was being sought.)

- **Restrained generalisation**

It is recognised that, because an action research intervention relates to a unique organisational setting, the research project cannot be repeated. However, Gummesson (1988, p 78) is quoted as stating:

It no longer seems so 'obvious' that a limited number of observations cannot be used as a basis for generalisation ...

Action researchers can generalise, but must exercise restraint in their conclusions, and must demonstrate the validity of their research (ie the degree to which intended goals are accomplished).



This research has demonstrated that the research goals, in terms of the research themes posed, have been met in a real business environment, and validated by project sponsor and participants. Attempts have been made to aid generalisation of the research by detailed recording of how the change in Weltanschauungen occurred and contributing factors, as well as providing analysis of culture and degree of receptivity to cultural change. However, restraint has been used in claiming generalisation.

Having responded to the above quality guidelines, it is acknowledged that a limitation of this research is that, although the intent to implement actions to reinforce the cultural change was agreed in the workshops, evaluating the actual implementation was outside the scope of this research. Neither was there opportunity to return to the organisation to question the outcomes as part of further research, because soon after the completion of the case studies the host organisation ceased to exist (being amalgamated into the Ministry of Justice). Therefore it cannot be claimed that the change in culture resulted in actual implementation of organisational change.

However, in further SSM consultancy work which the researcher has undertaken with the Ministry of Justice it has been observed that in the IT branch (which was the only area where a CLD manager remained in a position), many of the decisions made in the case study were being implemented, despite the difficulties of settling into the new Ministry.

From the perspective of the ability to generalise from this research, analysis of relevant literature, discussions with other SSM researchers, and reflection on the learning experience provided by this research, have been used to identify the following factors which impact the general applicability of the above findings to other organisations:

- Receptiveness to cultural change
- The role of the facilitator
- The way SSM is applied

Each is discussed below:

### **9.5.1. The extent to which the organisation is receptive to cultural change**

The degree of receptiveness to cultural change of any organisation will be a factor in the extent to which SSM can contribute to the cultural change process. Identifying this receptiveness for the case study organisations assisted the general applicability of the research findings, as well as providing the approach whereby this receptivity analysis could be carried out for other organisations. The analysis recognises the complexities in identifying and measuring culture. However, the validity of the analysis carried out by the researcher was improved by the sponsor reviewing and agreeing with the findings. It also of note that Morgan (1986, p 121) suggests that the easiest way of understanding a culture is to observe it as an outsider (ie the approach used by the researcher).

The analysis concluded that Case Study 1 was an organisation which had quite a high receptivity to cultural change. This was also likely to be true of Case Study 2, but to a slightly lesser extent than Case Study 1.

### **9.5.2 The role of the facilitator in the SSM process.**

The questionnaire responses indicated that the sponsor and participants in the case studies rated highly the contribution made by the facilitator, and many made comments to substantiate this view.

Further, the interviews with UK SSM practitioners/researchers identified that:

- The matching of the organisation's culture and the facilitator's style is key to successful organisational change projects.
- There is a wide range of facilitation styles, from soft to harsh, from liberal to professional, and including therapist, counsellor, facilitator, catalyst, coach and mediator.

The research raises two important questions.

1. To what extent were the changes in Weltanschauungen and the perceived success of the case studies the result of the facilitator's style rather than the SSM approach.
2. To what extent did the facilitator's style in this research overcome some of the concerns expressed by proponents of Critical Systems Thinking in relation to the ability of SSM to be emancipatory. Specific aspects of the style which may have had this effect were the attempt to create an environment where all workshop participants felt that their input was equally valued, and the deep questioning and challenging of Weltanschauung, including the exploration of social and economic barriers to a new, more strategic role for the case study organisations. A facilitator with a less challenging style may not have achieved the same shift in Weltanschauungen.

The research also highlighted that the relationship of client and facilitator will to some extent result from mutual selection of each other based on trust and shared values. This can lead to conservatism in the application of SSM, resulting in reinforcement and extension of existing norms, behaviours and values.

### **9.5.3. The way SSM is applied.**

The way SSM was used in the case studies is also important to understanding and generalising the research outcomes. Factors relate to Mode 1 or 2<sup>†</sup> use of SSM, and adaptations made to the methodology. For this research these were:

- The starting framework for each case study was Mode 1 use of SSM. However, Mode 2 was introduced and found to be valuable:

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<sup>†</sup> Mode 1 and Mode 2: "... the difference between, on the one hand, mentally starting from SSM, using it to structure what is done, and, on the other, mentally starting from what is to be done and mapping it on to SSM, or making sense of it through SSM." (Checkland and Scholes, 1991, p 281)

- When there is no perceived business problem, and therefore difficulty in defining alternative Weltanschauungen as a basis for achieving organisational change (as in Case Study 1).
- When a history of conflict in a problem situation has not been overcome by applying Mode 1 use of SSM (as in Case Study 2).
- The researcher made adaptations to SSM in order to maximise participation and learning by users and to introduce new techniques for Organisational Analysis & Synthesis and Conceptual Modelling . These adaptations, in SSM tradition, are not intended to be prescriptive but may prove useful.

## **9.6 FURTHER RESEARCH**

The inevitable limitations in the scope and methods of any research project lead to further questions in the mind of the researcher. This research was no exception and its limitations and findings have given rise to the following suggestions for further research.

### **9.6.1 Conceptual Activity Models**

This research resulted in a surprising outcome that participants in Case Study 1 regarded activity modelling as the least significant factor contributing to a change in Weltanschauungen. The result was unexpected, firstly because the researcher and sponsor believed that the use of models had been extremely valuable, and secondly because this view was also strongly expressed in the SSM literature and in interviews with other SSM consultants. Some participants made comments about the limitation of generic models, but in this research it was not possible to enquire more deeply why the participants placed such a relatively low value on modelling.

In order to further the learning about SSM and progress its evolution, it is therefore important that research be undertaken to evaluate project participants' reactions to activity modelling, and the reasons for these reactions, with comparisons to the perceptions of the project sponsor and facilitator.

### **9.6.2 Impact of the Facilitator**

The importance of the different styles of facilitation and their perceived impacts on participants and project outcomes were discussed in general terms in the interviews with other SSM consultants. A wide range of different styles were identified. The criticality of the relationship between sponsor and consultant was also discussed in these interviews, with trust identified as an important component. In addition, the case study participants and sponsor rated the facilitator as one of the major factors contributing to changed Weltanschauungen and made comments which reinforced the positive view they had of the facilitator's style. From a different perspective, proponents of Critical Systems Thinking have raised concerns about the conservative nature of SSM, and that the relationship between sponsor and consultant is likely to lead to outcomes which reinforce the status quo.

Clearly the facilitator's role and style are integral to the use of SSM to achieve organisational change. Further research is needed to measure these roles and styles and their impact, in order to reach conclusions about the most appropriate role and style for specific types of organisations and organisational change projects.

### **9.6.3 Real Business Projects**

The majority, if not all, of the formal research which has informed the evolution of SSM has occurred in projects where the research intention has been stated in advance. There is concern by this researcher that this has affected the choice of organisations, the type of projects available, the behaviour of the sponsor and participants, and hence

the research findings. To overcome these concerns this research was carried out using two of the researcher's normal business consultancy projects, and the request to use the projects for PhD research was not made until the projects were completed.

Further research is required under these "real business conditions" in order to compare and contrast results with the more academically focussed research, as a basis for further learning in relation to how to use SSM to assist business organisations with organisational change. Such research will need to consider how to overcome ethical concerns when conducting action research in organisations and not declaring the research intent in advance.

#### **9.6.4 Receptiveness to Organisational Change**

In this research it was considered important to determine to what extent the changes in Weltanschauungen had occurred because the case study organisations were readily receptive to cultural change. This evaluation does not appear to have been applied to other researchers' SSM projects.

The difficulties of comparing action research are acknowledged, as well as the problems in measuring culture, nonetheless it would be useful if other SSM research included receptiveness to cultural change in the interpretation of research outcomes, and if specific research was undertaken to compare similar SSM approaches in multiple organisations with different degrees of receptiveness to change.

#### **9.6.5 Roles, Norms, Values**

In attempting to measure changes in Weltanschauungen as indicators of cultural change, it was discovered that changed Weltanschauungen may not imply a change in all three cultural aspects - roles, norms and values. In particular, in Case Study 2 significant change in direction and behaviour had been agreed at the gap analysis stage of the project, but the post-project questionnaires clearly showed that no change in role and values had occurred, in fact the existing ones had been reinforced.

Further research is required to evaluate the extent to which changes in Weltanschauungen relate to roles, norms and/or values, and the implications of this for how SSM is used as well as the implementation of organisational change.

#### **9.6.6 Implementation of Organisational Change**

The scope of this research, and the fact that the host organisation ceased to exist soon after the case studies were completed, meant that it was not possible to determine if the change in thinking, as expressed by the shifts in Weltanschauungen, actually resulted in the introduction of successful organisational change.

While it is recognised that a number of additional factors will influence the implementation of SSM project outcomes, there is a need for research projects which include the implementation stage. This will inevitably result in learning about how the use of the methodology can evolve to assist implementation.

#### **9.6.7 SSM Education**

This research has highlighted that SSM practitioners need a good understanding of organisational culture, cultural change, and the impact of the role and style of the facilitator. Research is required to identify how best to achieve this understanding in the tertiary education courses which teach SSM.

### **9.7 CONCLUSIONS & CONTRIBUTION**

Over the last 13 years claims have been made in the extensive literature on SSM that the methodology assists members of an organisation to achieve changes in values and attitudes towards solving organisational problems and defining new directions (eg Atkinson 1986). There are claims (eg Checkland and Scholes 1990) that SSM is a systemic process of learning, and that to maximise this learning SSM should be used as

a participative approach. "The aim of an intervention is to donate the approach to the participants in the problem situation, to get them to use it and to leave them with the ability to use it in future" (Checkland, 1986, p 2)

Despite this, nowhere in the literature of SSM has the participants' viewpoint been researched in-depth. If the aim of the methodology is to change the thinking and assist the learning of people participating in a study, then it is critical that we investigate whether they believe such change has occurred, otherwise there is a temptation to dismiss the literature as biased accounts from researchers about the success of projects. Even where the sponsor's viewpoint has been included (eg Checkland and Scholes 1990) - and usually this is supportive of the researcher's perspective - this does nothing to test what the participants have experienced. Further, if participants expressed a change in Weltanschauungen based on the primary task of the organisation, it is important to know whether they believe that the new Weltanschauungen are appropriate since Jackson (eg 1982, 1985) has argued that the participative approach is not effective for less privileged participants (in terms of their intellectual, political and economic resources). Again, this participant view has not been reported in the literature.

In addition, the literature on SSM tends to focus on the importance of root definitions and conceptual models in achieving a change in thinking by the participants in the study. This has generated considerable activity in improving the use of these techniques (eg Woodburn 1985, Davies and Ledington 1991, Watson 1992, as well as the extensive writings of Checkland). However again, and surprisingly, the participant viewpoint on the usefulness of the techniques has not been tested.

This research makes a significant and unique contribution to the theory and practice of SSM by using rigorous action research techniques to identify whether participants in two case studies believed a change in Weltanschauungen had been achieved, and if so, whether they believed the change to be appropriate, and what factors had contributed to that change.



The research results for Case Study 1 clearly indicated that the majority of the participants did believe that a change in Weltanschauungen had occurred and that the change was appropriate. However, interpretation of Case Study 2 results was more complex, indicating that a change in behaviour was being signalled without a change in role or values. This result makes a further contribution in extending the theory of SSM by highlighting that a change in primary task Weltanschauung may not signal a change in roles, norms and values.

The participants' views on factors which contributed to changed Weltanschauungen challenge established SSM assertions on the importance of conceptual models, since participants rated these as the least important factor. Significantly, this was in direct opposition to the more traditional views of this researcher and her sponsor who believed the models had been a catalyst for changed thinking. Similarly, while I believed pre-workshop interviews to be crucial (and this view was reinforced in the interviews with UK SSM practitioners/researchers), the participants again did not consider this factor so important.

The participants rated most highly items relating to the way the project was structured (eg working with colleagues, input from clients, use of workshops), the role of the facilitator, and techniques introduced by the researcher for the Organisational Analysis & Synthesis phase of SSM. Again these factors, and especially the role of the facilitator, have been ignored or down-played in the SSM literature.

In addition, the majority of the SSM research and literature aims to improve the application of the methodology in business environments. However, most, if not all, of the SSM research, and certainly the body of knowledge emanating from Checkland and the University of Lancaster, has been declared as research in advance of projects commencing. The researcher firmly believes that this affects the choice of organisations, the type of topics, and the behaviour of sponsor and participants (and this view has been reiterated in the interview with Scholes). This research makes an important contribution by carrying out SSM action research in a true business environment, as part of normal business consultancy projects, where the sponsor and

participants were not aware of the research intent. Therefore there can be greater certainty that behaviour was not modified because of the research focus and that findings will be relevant in business environments.

Apart from the analyses related to the research themes, further contribution in relation to SSM projects was made as follows:

- The action research tested, in real business projects, the mix of Mode 1 and 2 use of SSM and found this approach to be useful. In particular, use of Mode 2 was found to be valuable in two situations:
  - When there is no perceived business problem, and therefore difficulty in defining alternative Weltanschauungen as a basis for achieving organisation change.
  - When a history of conflict in a problem situation has not been overcome by applying Mode 1 use of SSM.
- SSM project facilitators and clients tend to select each other based on trust and shared values and this can lead to the SSM project reinforcing the client's values, despite the client genuinely stating that there are no predetermined solutions for the project, and despite the facilitator's attempts to display no bias. In this situation, unless the client desires to change the Weltanschauung radically, then it is unlikely that dramatic shifts in culture will occur, and hence the process could be regarded as conservative. (This concurs with the views expressed by Jackson 1991b, Mingers 1980, Rosenhead 1984, Spear 1987.)
- An inter-linked group of techniques have been introduced and tested by the researcher, both in this research and many other consultancy projects, to strengthen the participative approach to using SSM. These techniques are pre-workshop interviews based on structured questions; use of the facilitator role and workshops to ensure all stages of the SSM process are carried out by the users, not for the users; and workshop techniques to explore Organisational Analysis and Synthesis.

- Use of a template and rules to guide the development of activity models has also been tested.

From an SSM perspective, the results challenge researchers and practitioners to rethink the way SSM is applied, to understand the participant point of view, and specifically to recognise that aspects of SSM which are considered most helpful by the practitioner/researcher may be viewed differently by the participants.

The research has also made a contribution from the perspective of the theory and knowledge relating to organisational culture. A number of researchers have highlighted the difficulty in changing organisational culture (eg Edwards 1988, Frank 1987, Wilkins and Ouchi 1983). This research has demonstrated that an SSM process can assist the first steps in achieving cultural change, namely changes in beliefs concerning the purpose(s) of an organisation and the development of strategies to support such change. However, the research also highlights the complexity of the concept of organisational culture and cultural change and recognises that there are many aspects of culture which are wider than the roles, norms and values related to organisational purpose, and these may not change as a result of change in Weltanschauung.

To assist in generalising from these case studies, an analysis was undertaken concerned with the degree of receptiveness to cultural change. One of the receptiveness factors used - 'availability of key people leading change' - has been highlighted by a number of researchers (eg Walsham 1991, Ouchi and Price 1978, Van de Ven 1983, Edwards 1983). This research confirmed the importance of leadership, from the participants' viewpoint. This is reinforced by the fact that in the post-project questionnaire 'leadership and involvement of senior management' was considered to be the second most important factor in achieving a changed Weltanschauung.

In conclusion, this research has focussed on the way SSM can assist organisations to introduce cultural change, to assist in improving organisational effectiveness from the perspectives of the individuals involved. The limitations of the research in terms of the

weaknesses of action and survey research, the bias of the researcher, and the scope of the case studies are acknowledged. Nonetheless, the researcher asserts that the action research reported herein has extended existing research by showing that an SSM project can be used to achieve a change in Weltanschauungen by project sponsor and participants, and that this signifies some aspects of cultural change.

The general applicability of this finding was assisted by the participants identifying which factors in the SSM project most assisted the cultural change, and by the researcher identifying the receptiveness to cultural change of the case study organisations, and providing a precise specification of how SSM was used and the role of the facilitator.

The researcher is confident, therefore, that in organisations which display a general receptiveness to change, the approach used in these case studies, and the SSM learning described, should prove useful in guiding such organisations in the process of cultural change.

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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **SSM PROJECTS CARRIED OUT BY ELIZABETH PATTISON** **1984 - 1994**

In addition to the following projects carried out using Soft Systems Methodology (SSM), since 1988 I have also taught SSM to graduate students in the School of Information Systems at Curtin University of Technology. This work includes supervising students' SSM projects undertaken in various types of organisations. In addition courses in SSM were also conducted for specific organisations and the general public.

#### **1. Health Department of WA, 1984 - 1987**

As a member of the staff of the Health Department during this period I had responsibility for the planning of health and hospital information systems and introduced SSM as the framework for this work. SSM information planning projects which I led were in relation to:

- Non Teaching Hospitals
- Dental Hospital
- Allied Health Services
- Administrative Systems

#### **2. Consultancy Projects, 1988 - 1994**

In all of the following consultancy projects I have been the consultant responsible for the project and have facilitated the SSM analysis. The projects range from single workshops to six month long projects (eg Crown Law Department's Court information systems feasibility study).

**1988**

Crown Law Department:

Feasibility study for Court information systems.

Feasibility study for head office administrative systems.

Westrail:

Information requirements analysis for engineering workshops and maintenance activities.

Building Management Authority:

Project undertaken with R.D. Galliers to facilitate the development of an information plan.



Fremantle Port Authority:  
Information requirements analyses for finance and engineering activities.

**1988/89 (financial year)**

Fremantle Port Authority:  
Library requirements.

Westrail:  
Strategic information requirements analysis.  
Linking SSM and SSADM for specific projects.  
Information requirements for transporting grain to port.

**1989/89**

Telecom:  
Business Planning for Client Services (Information Technology Group).

Curtin University Library:  
Development of a Strategic Plan.

State Energy Commission of WA:  
Procedures & Systems for Gas Division.  
Business Plans for the following groups - Engineering Projects,  
Electricity Generation, Electricity Transmission, Electricity Supply,  
Gas.

State Library Services:  
Presentation of a Soft Systems Methodology Course and workshops as  
part of the Library's strategic planning project.

Fremantle Port Authority:  
Information requirements analysis for Marketing Branch.

**1990/91**

State Energy Commission of WA:  
Information requirements analysis for a work management system for  
Gas Division.  
Business plan for Accounting Branch.

Education Department of WA:  
Planning for HR information system.  
Information systems planning methodology.

Library Association of Singapore:  
Strategic planning workshop.

Parliamentary Library:  
Strategic planning workshop.

Telecom:  
Desktop Solutions Group strategic planning.  
Data Networks Group strategic planning.

## **1991/92**

Continuation of projects for: State Energy Commission of WA, Education Department, Telecom.

Murdoch University Library:  
Strategic plan.

Spark & Cannon (court reporters):  
Strategic planning and assistance with implementation.

Shire of Kalamunda:  
Information technology plan.

Building Management Authority:  
Business direction for the information services group.

## **1992/93**

Continuation of projects for: Spark & Cannon

Crown Law Department:  
Corporate Services organisational review.  
Library Services organisational review.

Building Management Authority:  
HR management information needs analysis.

Records Management Association:  
Development of a strategic plan.

Curtin University of Technology:  
Development of strategic plans for the following schools:  
Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Nursing.

Water Authority of WA:  
Review of library services.

State Energy Commission of WA:  
Business plans for Gas district offices.

Strategic planning and information planning for the new gas business  
(to be separated from electricity business January 1995).

#### **1993/94**

Continuation of projects for:  
State Energy Commission of WA; Telecom; Water Authority of WA.

Hydroplan:  
Assessment of water use efficiency management for the town of  
Esperance.

Shire of Kalamunda:  
Corporate plan.

Murdoch University Library:  
Update of strategic plan.

City of Subiaco:  
Strategic plan.

Department of Community Development:  
Strategic Plan for Information Research Group.

Department of Transport:  
Strategic direction.

Ministry of Justice:  
Strategic information plan.

Shire of Mundaring:  
Strategic plan.

State Health Purchasing Authority:  
Investigation of new role and development of strategies to achieve  
organisational change.

Lotteries Commission:  
Identification of roles and strategies.

## APPENDIX 2

### ADAPTATION OF SSM

An understanding of the way I have used SSM is important to the interpretation of the case studies and research conclusions. Outlined below are my adaptation, understanding and use of SSM at the time of the case studies. This, in fact, represents ten years work in my use and evolution of SSM.

#### THE NATURE OF SSM

I view SSM as a communication system which provides a vehicle for participants to develop a shared vision of the future and decide strategies to move closer to that vision. I emphasise shared vision and not consensus, which I believe cannot be achieved as individuals will still maintain their own value systems (Galliers et al, 1991).

In undergoing the SSM experience the aim is for participants to learn about each other, their organisation, and the process of enquiry. SSM makes explicit the assumptions which are the basis of decisions, and as such is more rigorous as a communication tool than many other methodologies (i.e. the elements of CATWOE and especially Weltanschauungen are expressed). This view is reinforced by Jackson (1992, p 22), when he states of SSM "... it is the most self-conscious (and certainly the most rigorous) attempt at an interpretive systems methodology".

Viewing SSM as a communication system where communication is interpreted as participative oral debate, rather than communicating in a more remote way by writing and reading, makes a workshop style approach a prerequisite to using the methodology. I believe that the major steps and decisions in the project must occur in the workshops and must be owned by the participants (as also reinforced by Galliers et al 1994). This mitigates against the analyst, or a select group, developing CATWOEs or models outside the workshops, and I try to avoid this at all times.

I perceive from the literature and from the interviews with other SSM consultants that my approach here is somewhat different, and that in other projects thinking does occur in a separate workroom, and models may be drawn overnight, etc. This is an important issue. If the consultant does the analysis, then the consultant has the learning experience, and not the participants. While this might be acceptable in a benevolent host organisation for a student project, I consider it not to be ethical for a business consultancy project (as were my case studies).

SSM is a vehicle for challenging values as well as processes and structures, and as such can be useful in establishing the foundation for organisational and cultural change.

The questions asked via the methodology can be a catalyst to lateral thinking. This is especially true as SSM can also provide a non threatening way of exploring issues, weaknesses and differences of opinion. I believe that approaching problems as opportunities to make improvements aids this situation, and that a problem-oriented and negative debate inevitably is not a catalyst to creative thinking - it is human nature to be demoralised by the weight of the problems to the extent that the group or individuals believe that an answer cannot be found. Hence I avoid Checkland's (1981) phrase "problem situation" in projects. I have however used the terms problem solving system and problem content system in my discussion here.

I recognise that Checkland has deliberately chosen the words problem situation, (ie situations where the participants perceive a problem), and he rejects the concept of a defined problem; however I believe problem situation still has negative connotations.

The iterative approach to the steps in the methodology facilitates learning as users loop back to an early stage of thinking to build in the clarifications which have occurred as a result of debating successive stages.

SSM can be successful in building ownership and commitment to the decisions made, and hence this should assist the process of implementation.

All projects involving people are candidate projects for the use of SSM, since they will all involve aspects of culture, viewpoint, and personal and interpersonal issues. That is, I reject the notion that SSM is appropriate for only those organisational problems which are particularly complex or messy. Neither is it necessary for there to be a pressing problem. In the instance of Case Study 1, there was simply a desire to review Corporate Services to ensure that the role and activities were the most appropriate for changes taking place in the wider organisation. This is quite different to the initial SSM focus on “ill-defined problems” (Checkland, 1981 p 18).

SSM is a meta-methodology and is open to other approaches being incorporated into SSM projects.

My definition is that a successful SSM project is one where:

Firstly, the participants have undergone a learning experience involving shared understanding, which has enabled them to arrive at an agreed set of actions which they believe will improve the situation which is the subject of the project.

Secondly, the agreed set of actions must improve the situation, recognising that the actions themselves will evolve as the participants learn from the implementation process. (Note, however, that the latter is not included in the scope of this research.)

This second criterion is difficult to evaluate as other factors, after the completion of the project, will inevitably impact on implementation success. But if we do not evaluate whether the actions were the best choice, could be implemented and did make a positive difference, then it is difficult to evaluate the benefits of having achieved shared understanding. At a practical level this also has implications for the choice of participants. They must include the stakeholders who have the power to achieve implementation of the agreed actions.

The degree of success which can be achieved via a SSM project is dependent on the context, and the abilities of the participants and facilitator, each of which is discussed below.

- **Context**

Context relates to the business constraints or opportunities which are imposed on the project. Typical constraints are timeframe, number and choice of participants, and limitations placed on the problem situation.

For example the total timeframe for the SSM process may be limited to a single day workshop. There may be an insistence on a larger number of participants than appropriate for good communication. All the key stakeholders (ie those empowered to make decisions relevant to the situation) may not be included as participants. There may

not be an opportunity to conduct pre-workshop interviews, or involve the organisation's clients in the process. Certain topics may be excluded from the scope, eg for political reasons.

While it is the responsibility of the facilitator to highlight the impact of such constraints and debate alternatives, the business situation may mean that the project must proceed with these constraints.

Alternatively, if these issues are favourable to the project, then the context will provide opportunities.

I do not regard the topic of the study as part of the context factors which impinge on success because I believe that any topic is a suitable candidate for an SSM project. While some topics are obviously more difficult to address than others, success is relevant to the degree of progress made in achieving organisational improvements, and not whether the entire situation is "solved". However, the pressure to solve the topic, as perceived by the participants (based on internal or external factors) is important to context, as urgency provides an incentive to achieve a successful outcome.

- **Abilities of Participants**

The degree of learning achieved by different groups of participants, via the SSM approach, depends on:

- The amount of hostility, negativity and conflict which the participants bring to the project, linked to the preparedness of the group to overcome these - based on the history of the topic, the culture/subcultures of the organisation, and the personality attributes of the individuals.
- The extent to which the culture of the organisation promotes open and frank debate of alternative viewpoints and exploration of new ideas, without fear of reprisals.
- The life experience of the participants in all aspects of education, work and leisure which enables them to bring a rich range of ideas to the project.
- The knowledge of the participants of the topic.

However, it is not imperative for the participants to be formally taught SSM or know its language.

- **Ability of the Facilitator**

In my use of SSM, the facilitator is the person who takes responsibility for the problem solving system, and for the conduct of the participative workshop sessions.

I believe the ability of the facilitator is the most crucial factor of all in the success of an SSM project. This was confirmed in the interviews with UK SSM consultants (see Chapter 4) and in the questionnaire responses for the Case Studies (see Chapter 6). Facilitation skills required include:

- Ability to create empathy, and trust
- Intuition

- Communication skills
- Group process skills
- Ability to handle conflict
- Being a catalyst to creative thinking
- Ability to flexibly apply and manage the SSM approach
- Timekeeping skills to ensure deadlines are met and outcomes achieved
- Ability to be a motivator, coach, counsellor, or therapist as required
- Broad knowledge of the problem content situation.

Wilson & Morren (1990 p 118) describe the role of the facilitator in an SSM project:

“A facilitator’s competence rests on the ability to guide people through a process of inquiry...it is the ability to assist people to think rigorously about their difficulties and to see their situations in new ways so that beneficial change is possible...[the role is] change agent or catalyst”.

With regard to the facilitator role, I have also been involved in projects where the sponsor especially wanted the people in the problem situation to carry out this role, and for my role to be one of educating and quality assuring. This is a more complex, hands off approach, and requires that I ensure the internal facilitators have the above skills and abilities. However, this approach has been favoured by other SSM practitioners (eg Checkland, 1985b p 822).

The above description of SSM inevitably embodies my own Weltanschauung and beliefs regarding the methodology. It is appropriate, therefore, to consider how my views relate to the criticisms of SSM which have emanated from the proponents of critical systems thinking (eg Jackson 1982, Rosenhead 1984).

I appreciate that there will be imbalance amongst the participants of the workshops, since all members do not have the same degree of power, intellect, or equal access to resources, and especially information. This will inevitably inhibit free and open discussion and genuine agreement on action to be taken. My response is to recognise that the business projects in which I am involved (with the two case studies as a typical example) are not aimed at total restructure of society or complete redress of the above imbalances. They do, however, aim to achieve improved organisational effectiveness, and recognise that this inevitably involves maximising the potential of individuals within the system by increasing their participation, ownership and responsibility for the organisational change process. To assist this I aim to reduce the obvious manifestations of power imbalance in the workshop process, and to attempt to create an environment where the most open discussion possible can occur. The questionnaire responses from the case study participants (see Appendix 6) are possibly an indication of how successful I have been, but only to the extent that there can be confidence that the anonymous responses are a reflection of the true feelings of the respondents.

## MY VERSION OF SSM

My version of SSM is derived from the seven step model (Checkland 1981), although the use of it is usually closer to the ethos of Checkland and Scholes (1990, p192), with a Mode 2 perspective, ie “methodology internalised as tacit knowledge”. This comparison between Mode 1 and Mode 2 use of SSM for the case studies is explored further in Chapter 8. Because all my SSM studies are business consultancies, in contrast to students looking for a

research project, my use of the methodology is of the nature of doing a study using SSM, rather than using SSM to do a study.

“If a study is done which happens to use SSM, then its use is likely to be very flexible, and at more than one level. Its value is then as an epistemology by means of which an analyst can make sense of the flux of project activity.” (Checkland & Scholes, 1990, p 163)

My adaptation to SSM changes, but not significantly in terms of core concepts, depending on the requirements of a specific project.

There is debate in the literature as to what characterises a methodology as being within the SSM family (Smith & Watson 1992, Atkinson 1986). From my own set of criteria, I believe that despite some differences from Checkland, using Mode 1 thinking (Checkland & Scholes, p 285), my approach would be classified as SSM because:

- It is based on systems thinking; the systems concepts of emergence, hierarchy, communication and control, connectivity, boundary and the ability of the system to survive; and the notion of human activity systems undertaking purposeful activity.
- I include exploration of the problem situation, although I use Galliers’ terminology of Organisational Analysis and Synthesis (eg Galliers 1988), and I do not formally develop rich pictures.
- I differentiate between the Real World and Conceptual/Systems Thinking.
- I analyse CATWOE, although may use different labels for the questions, and develop a type of Root Definition, although again with a different label.
- Conceptual models are developed, although some of the criteria for a technically “correct” model are different to Checkland’s (1981).
- I carry out the comparison between systems thinking and the real world situation (sic) as a basis for developing actions to improve the situation.

Checkland & Scholes (1990, p 286) have presented their set of new constitutive rules of SSM as a basis for determining whether a methodology falls within the SSM family. They are presented and considered below:

- **SSM as a structured way of thinking about a real-world problematical situation, in order to bring about improvements:**

My approach is in line with this thinking, although Case Study 1 had no perceived problem to solve and this caused difficulties in arriving at Weltanschauungen, as discussed in Chapter 8, SSM learning.

- **Structured thinking based on systems ideas:**

Systems thinking, and elements of General Systems Theory are evident in my approach, and especially in the criteria for developing and checking conceptual activity models.



The following guidelines are followed:

- a) **No automatic assumption that the real world is systemic.**

This is followed to the extent that models do not represent the real world, and are used not to structure the real world like the models, but to use the concepts as a basis for improving the real world.

- b) **Careful distinction between unreflecting involvement in the everyday world and conscious systems thinking about the real world:**

Adhered to in essence in my work by bounding the systems thinking by a project structure which buffers it from day to day activities of the real world, ie creates thinking space.

- c) **In systems thinking, use of holons which have emergent properties, layered construction, communication and control:**

My models meet these criteria.

- d) **Holons used to enquire into the real world and identify changes deemed feasible and desirable:**

This is the basis of my gap analysis stage.

- **Conscious thought about how to adapt SSM to each situation:**

This is usually forced by the commercial, business nature of my projects where methodology has to be explained in advance and proposals or project plans developed, even though not usually in SSM terminology.

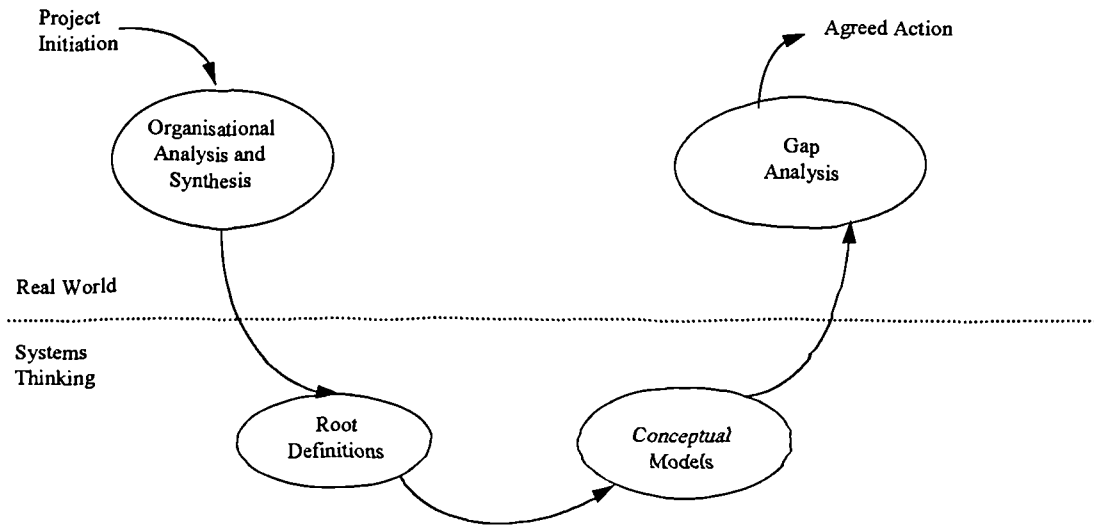
- **Conscious reflection on the learning experience in using SSM:**

Necessary for me to do in order to earn a living, as explained below.

The model I use to represent SSM is shown and described below, and is derived from Mode 1 (Checkland and Scholes 1990) and Galliers (1985):

Figure 3:

SSM MODEL



However, the above model, in its stark representation of a number of iterative steps, does not expose the deeper thinking about methodology which underpins my use of SSM.

Two pressures have pushed me to evolve my use of SSM:

Firstly, because of my belief in the value of the methodology to assist in business consultancy projects, I have chosen SSM as the basis of my consultancy business, and hence my livelihood. In order to continue to be asked to do work for clients, and especially repeat business with the same client (which I feel is where I can often make the greatest contribution because of past learning), then it is necessary for me to continue to reflect on the use of SSM and how I personally can continue to learn and improve its use.

Secondly, in teaching SSM to postgraduate students I need to be able to respond in a meaningful way, mixing theory and practice, to questions about the nature of SSM and the way it may be used. This, too, forces me to reflect on the learning experience above, and build it into my teaching.

Thus, underpinning the Mode 1 representation of SSM above, is a deeper Mode 2 type reflection on SSM as a framework of ideas interacting with events. (Checkland & Scholes, 1990 p 283)

In presenting the typical stages of an SSM project below, I am assuming that Mode 2 type thinking is in operation while the stages are carried out.

- **Project Preparation**

- a) Project Definition Meeting(s)

One or more meetings are held with the project sponsor to discuss the project. Sometimes the sponsor may invite key stakeholders to these meetings. The depth of discussion will depend on whether I have worked with the sponsor on previous SSM

projects, in which case there will be an established understanding of project approach. The aim of these meetings is to:

- Establish (or maintain) rapport between facilitator and client.
- Debate the initial view of the purpose and scope of the project, recognising that this will evolve.
- Identify any constraints such as timeframe, cost, etc.
- Agree the broad project approach, i.e. participative SSM, although this terminology may not be used.
- Discuss alternatives in relation to participants, eg senior personnel only; including clients; mix of personnel from different organisational levels.
- Develop a broad understanding of the project plan and determine whether a written project proposal and plan is required.
- Identify sources of background information (usually documentary) to brief me on the history of the situation.
- Agree next steps.

(Note: In accordance with government regulations the submitting of a formal tender response (and the subsequent winning of the work) may be part of project initiation.

b) Project Launch

Where a wide, participative approach is being taken for a project (as for Case Study 1), then it is usual to hold one or more project launch meetings to discuss the project with all staff involved in the project scope and gain their enthusiasm.

- **Organisational Analysis and Synthesis** (cf Galliers, 1985)

This is a Real World phase.

This is a phase of sharing perceptions of the current situation and expectations for the future. However, I place a major emphasis on pushing the participants towards focussing on the future, since unless we begin to develop a shared vision of what we want the future to be like, it is difficult to know whether (at all subsequent stages) we are making the appropriate choices to improve the current situation. To this extent, while this is a Real World phase of the methodology some of the ideas presented are very soft and may be more hopes and perceptions than concrete knowledge.

One of the techniques used to project thinking towards the future is to ask participants to define the major issues which will impact on the organisation in the next, say, 3 to 5 years (i.e. assuming the system is open and survives by responding to external impacts). In some projects it is then useful to ask directly, "In response to these issues, what is your vision for the future?" This has proved especially insightful with groups such as local government elected Councillors, who usually hold office because they have a strong vision for the future.

Debate on values, i.e. how do we want to be perceived by customers, work mates, the industry, etc., is useful in uncovering culture and cultural expectations, and impacts on roles, as highlighted by Davies and Ledington (1991, p 41):

“The formation of roles comes from perceptions of what behaviour ought to be associated with various classifications or types ... However, what is not always obvious is that the classification process is value laden, that is, it bears hidden assumptions as to what is right and wrong. This is how roles and values are interlinked.”

This approach of focusing on issues, visions and values is different to the techniques explained in interview with Scholes (see Appendix 4) where he emphasised that hard data is more useful than perceptions at this stage of a project.

Approaches involved in Organisational Analysis and Synthesis workshops are typically:

- Review of any background documentation by the facilitator.
- Pre-workshop interviews, one-on-one with each project participant to create empathy; enable the facilitator to gain an initial appreciation of culture, issues and activities; and instigate debate about the project approach so as to engender confidence and creative thinking about the future.
- Workshops to debate, as appropriate:
  - Issues and challenges impacting on the future of the situation
  - Positioning against those issues and challenges, ie Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats.
  - Values (current, and values the participants would like to develop)
  - Vision (hopes) for the future of the problem situation.

Workshop rules and structured brainstorming techniques are used to assist in creating an environment conducive to open communication and creativity. (See Case Study 1, Appendix 5)

Workshops or interviews may also be used to gain client input regarding the current situation and future expectations.

Rich pictures may be sketched on the whiteboard from time to time, eg to demonstrate the impact of choosing different boundaries, but usually they are not kept and are not recreated as part of the project documentation.

The results of the organisational analysis and synthesis stage are:

- An improved shared understanding of the current situation and issues and challenges for the future.
- An understanding of the boundary of the situation to be investigated, although this may change as thinking evolves, and an indication of the factors external to the boundary which impact on the situation. I emphasise that the boundary is not a physical or organisational boundary, and in Case Study 1 the eventual boundary was different to the initial organisational boundary for Corporate Services.

In teaching SSM to graduate students I emphasise that if at the end of this stage of analysis there is not a feeling of being overwhelmed by the complexity and politics of the situation, then there is a need to go back and enquire further. All human activity systems are characterised by inconsistencies, complexities and interpersonal issues. In one of his earliest publications Checkland describes three case studies and says that in each there was “an early feeling of helplessness” (1972, p 10).

Throughout the project we return to this organisational analysis and synthesis, firstly, to enhance the information which was gathered based on further learning which has occurred, and secondly, to cross check that we are not missing any important issues in our later analysis.

- **CATWOE and Root Definitions**

The analysis in this phase is “below the line” systems thinking, ie the answers to the CATWOE questions do not represent the current situation, rather a range of alternatives is sought which might prove useful for the future.

If I believe debate is lacking in insight I might pose searching questions, bring in examples from other organisations, make suggestions, or move on to return to the question later - depending on intuition.

The framing of the CATWOE questions is adapted depending on the aim of the project and the language of the organisation.

Typically the first question might be to debate who will be the clients of the future, and how might their needs be changing. (“C”)

Other questions (all from a futures perspective) might be:

- What are we trying to achieve? Why will we exist? For what will we be accountable? (“W”)

(This is a “primary task” focus as per Checkland & Scholes, 1990 p 31.)

What problem are we trying to solve? Or what will be our major inputs and outputs/outcomes? (“T”)

(Although sometimes this question is not used, depending on whether it has been implied in the debating of “W”.)

- From a futures perspective, who will carry out the activities? For example, us in joint venture with other parties, us in partnership with our clients. (“A”)
- What external constraints will there be over which we have no control? (“E”). This question is not used if the debate has been covered as part of organisational analysis and synthesis.
- The Owner question of CATWOE is only used if I perceive it has relevance, ie will increase understanding or lead to an alternative viewpoint.

I believe the Weltanschauung debate provides the most insight of all the CATWOE questions, and typically is the most difficult to answer. I often use the example (after Checkland) of the implications of the W of a prison being punishment or rehabilitation,

and add further examples from my own experience. However, since most of my projects are in the public sector, I find participants often want to answer the W with “to provide an efficient and effective service”. I believe this is not very useful and push participants to look deeper within themselves and say what they really believe, even if it sounds unusual. Based on this type of debate I regard my use of the Root Definition concept as being primary task - rather than issue-based.

Alternative answers to each CATWOE question will be debated in terms of their implications for the situation being reviewed. I emphasise that there is no “correct” answer. Sometimes the debate continues until a single shared view is achieved, other times it is only after modelling, or gap analysis, or revisiting the organisational analysis and synthesis that a single view is decided as the appropriate one to be used for gap analysis.

The term Root Definition is not used, but a statement, such as Role or Mission (of the human activity system), may be generated to synthesise the CATWOE answers.

- **Activity Models**

This is a conceptual, “below the line” stage.

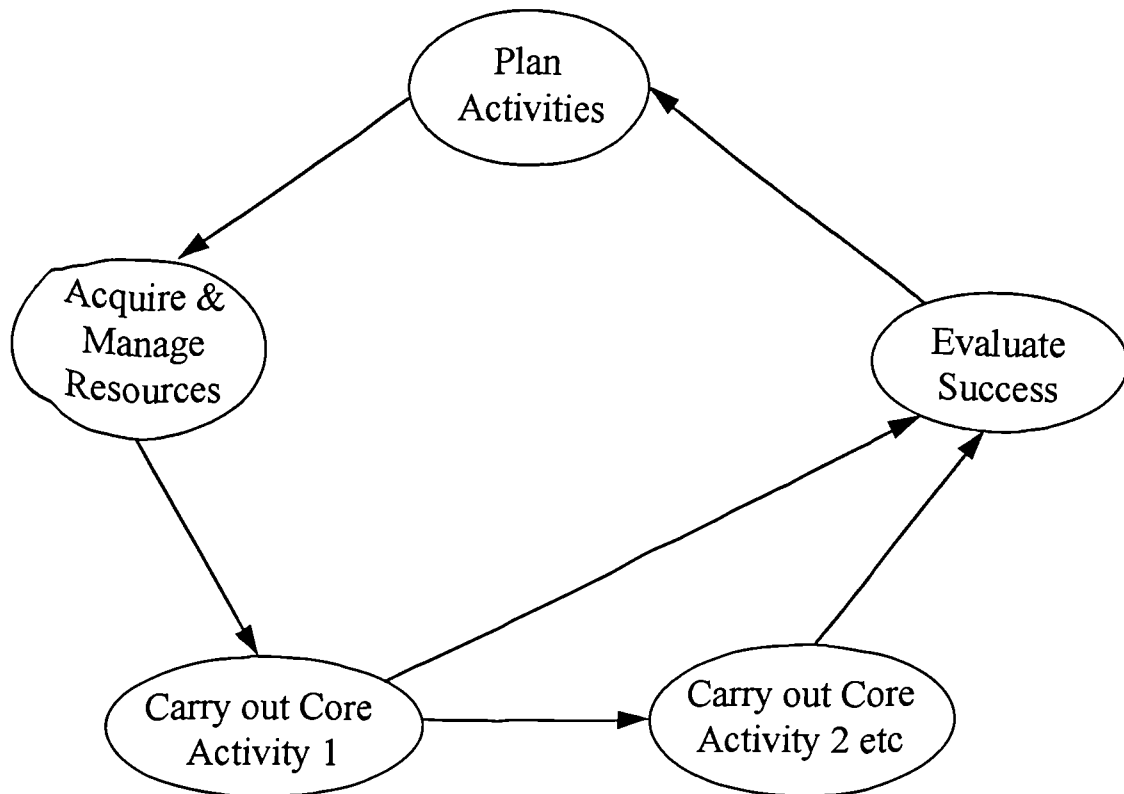
I still use the terminology conceptual model or activity model, rather than holon. (Checkland & Scholes, 1990), as I have found that business clients prefer terminology which is closer to their business language. They find conceptual model or activity model familiar but are confused by the term “holon”.

I agree with Watson (1992) that conceptual models are not mechanically derived from the CATWOE and Root Definition. This is always a learning phase which extends the thinking beyond the CATWOE and often requires iteration back to revise the CATWOE.

I use the following template as a starter for modelling, drawing it on the whiteboard in the workshop:

Figure 4:

## ACTIVITY MODEL TEMPLATE



I explain that any group of people coming together for some purpose will have one or more activities relating to planning and resourcing, and if they are going to survive they must consider how well they are doing (ie the Evaluate Success activity). I use examples of, say, a restaurant or a darts team (depending on what will interest the client).

I then add that each group or business does things which are specific to that business, and these are the core activities.

On referring back to Checkland's earlier work (1972, p 3), I realise that he explained purposeful human activity systems as being "concerned with the problems of management, in the broad sense that much human activity involves planning, doing and monitoring" and this may have been the catalyst for my development of the template. However, there was also a pragmatic concern. Many of my students worried that they would be "up front" in the role of facilitator and unable to develop a model. I was anxious to give them a starting point as a confidence booster.

In contrast to the Checkland models (eg Checkland and Scholes 1990) I draw the evaluation (or performance measuring) activity within the model and linked in to the other activities. I have found in teaching the methodology to university students that this conveys more strongly the linkage to activities within an identified system's boundary. Further, I believe the evaluation activity is less likely to be addressed superficially when it is explicitly described and locked in

to the model - rather than the monitor and control activity which we used to draw floating free, with lightning strike arrows, to show “impacts on every other activity” (eg Checkland 1981).

Once the template has been accepted and understood, we proceed to debate what activities are relevant for our future, given the CATWOE answers, rubbing out “bubbles” on the whiteboard and redrawing them many times until we feel we have evolved a meaningful shared vision. Sometimes alternative models will be drawn side by side to consider different Weltanschauungen, and alternative ways of expressing activities, and especially core activities.

My cross check criteria for models, based on General Systems Theory, are:

- All activities have an input and output (ie they display connectivity). I prefer this not to be via lightning strikes depicting connection to all activities. This tends to be a lazy way out and usually causes problems when gap analysis, or information analysis, is carried out. On the other hand, I do not draw a line from every activity to every activity, only the major linkages, or, again, the value of the model as a communication devise is reduced.
- The connectivity depicts some logical, information, or precedent relationship.
- Every model must have a feedback loop (usually an evaluate activity) to ensure continuity of the system.
- The model must have a boundary and some external interactions.
- All activities must begin with a verb.
- The verb “know” when starting an activity usually means this is not part of the system being developed, but an input from another system, ie the transformation process of “not knowing” to “knowing” is not usually very helpful.
- Typically there should be no less than 5 activities (or it probably is not a system) and no more than, say 12 or 14, or the complexity reduces the model’s usefulness as a communication tool.  
(Checkland & Scholes, 1990 p 37; cf Miller’s “the magic number”  $7 \pm 2$ ).
- Activities must be specific so that it is quite clear what the model carries out and achieves.
- The model reflects the answers to the CATWOE questions.

As my use of SSM has evolved I place increasing emphasis on the way activities are named, recognising that conceptual models are a communication tool and therefore they should convey some of the ethos, emotion, or excitement for the future. Too often bland models are developed with boring descriptions such as monitor and control, which not only fail to excite, but are far from the language of most organisations (and I was a culprit of this mistake in the past).

Depending on the project (and particularly the scope and timeframe), second level models may be developed. I prefer not to develop third level models as by this stage I believe the exponential degree of detail and complexity reduces the models as a communication devise. The holistic nature of the thinking is lost and neither participant nor facilitator can hold the whole picture in their head. However, the exception was in Case Study 1 where the first and second level models were generic. The starting point for the resource groups was really the



second level model, and the third level was needed to gain sufficient specificity. (See Case Study 1, Appendix 5.)

Where lower level models are developed the CATWOE questions are asked, to the extent appropriate, and usually mirror the way the questions were framed at the higher level.

However, in the case studies for this research I used a type of generic modelling for the first time in my projects. That is a model was developed at the highest level, and then taken as the template for all second level models. At this stage only the core activities were changed. The example below illustrates this point:

Figure 5:

**High Level Model, CLD, Case Study 1**

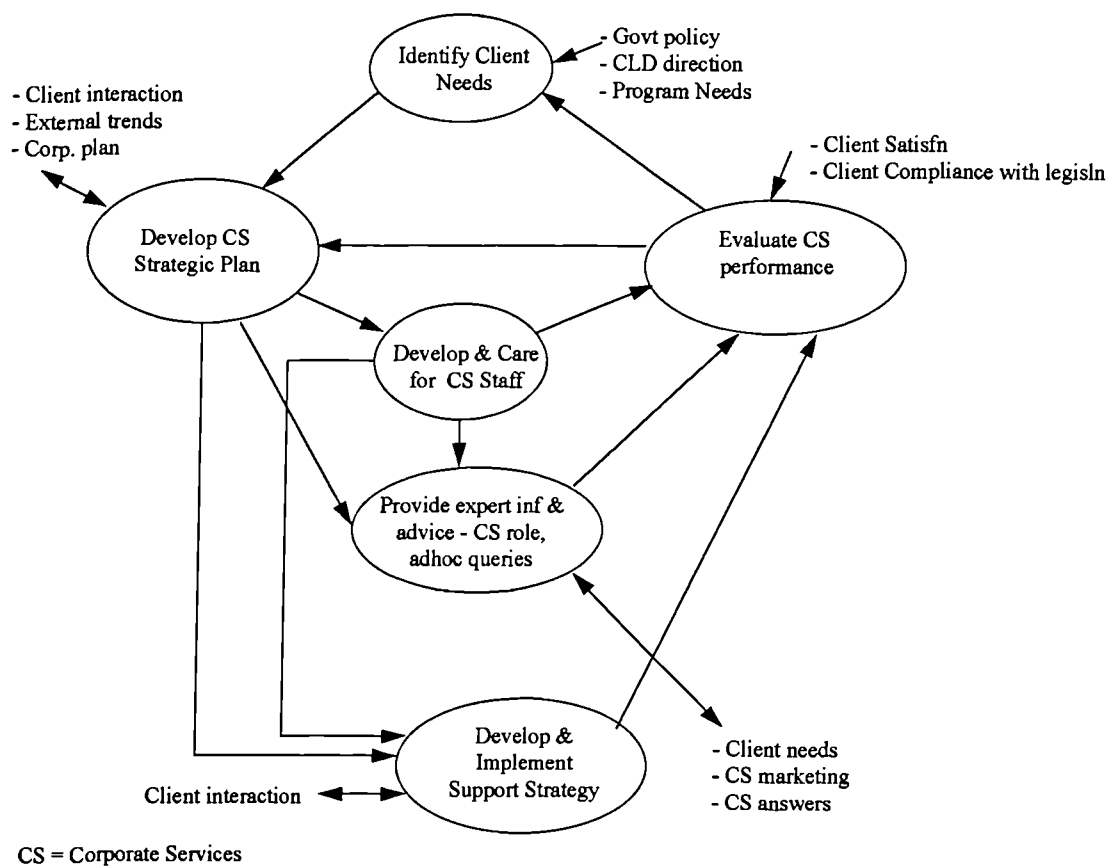
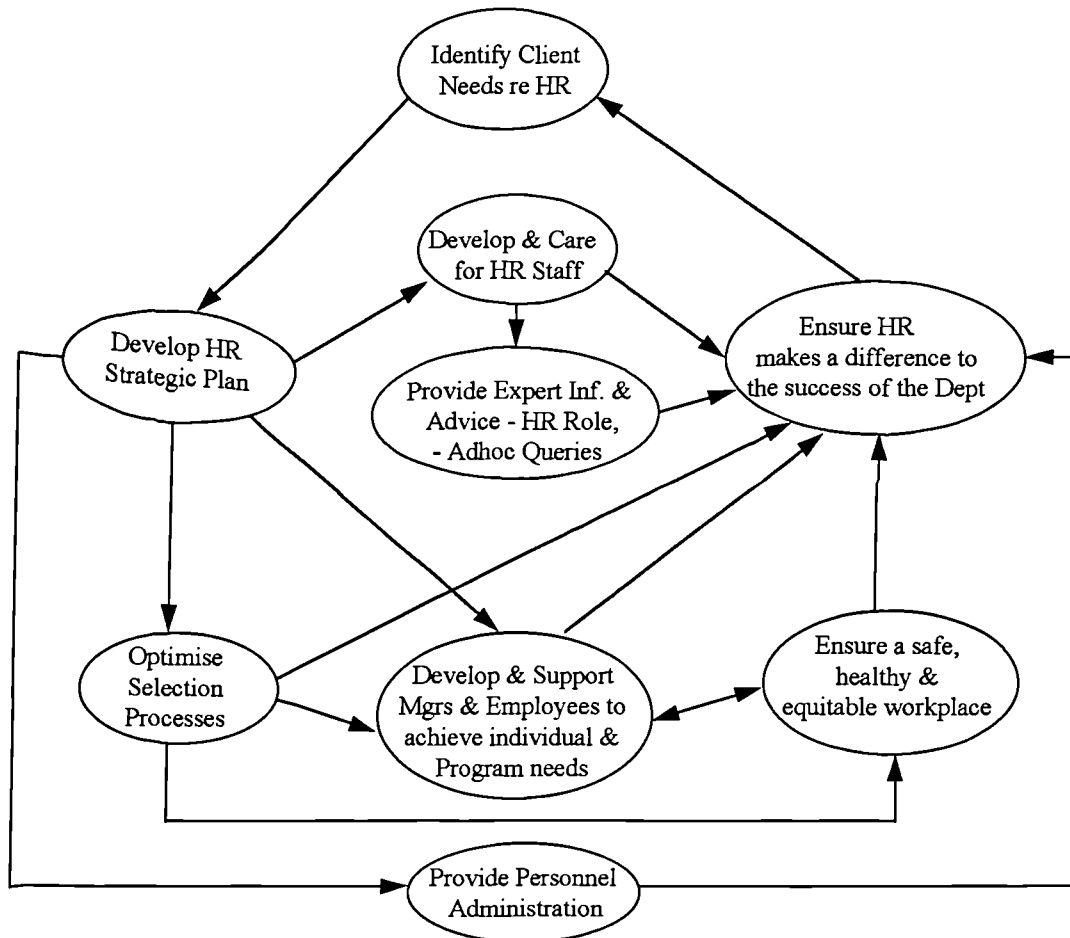


Figure 6:

**Example of 2nd Level Model, Case Study 1**



The potential for the high level model to be used in this way was suggested by the project sponsor. However, this is a departure from my usual use of SSM where every activity would be viewed as a sub system and developed to a second level using CATWOE as the starting point, as already mentioned. In contrast in the above example only the core activities were taken to the second level.

It may be that the particular nature of the project, ie Corporate Services, and the desire to view each resource area in a consistent way, lent itself to this approach. However there were weaknesses, because while consistency and commonality across resource areas was emphasised, the feedback from some participants was that some resource areas did not fit the model very well. It may have been that the participants were unfamiliar with modelling and did not relate to the models because they did not represent the current activities; rather they presented an alternative viewpoint of what could be a relevant human activity system. However, the difficulty could simply have been that the generic models did not fit.

- **Gap Analysis**

An “above the line” real world activity.

This is a stage of comparing the CATWOEs and models (ie the “below the line” thinking) with the real world situation (sic) and debating what action would need to be taken in order for the thinking behind the CATWOE and model to be implemented or achieved. The below the line thinking is considered to convey elements of the vision for the future, depicted from a systems thinking perspective. The degree of change required forces the question whether the vision can be, or should be achieved. This may cause refining of the CATWOE and models, or realisation that a staged approach to organisational change will be necessary to achieve the vision.

While during gap analysis there may be general discussion, the outcome of this stage is the identification of very specific action items, with timeframes, a person responsible for each action, and usually resourcing implications. I insist on this degree of specificity to overcome the problem of a report which just “sits on the shelf, gathering dust”, despite all the best intentions. However, in creating such a list of action items I recognise that we have introduced a set of *organisational change activities - a project in its own right - and many organisations* are not used to managing such projects. We therefore debate how best to manage the activities, as part of organisational learning, and how to adapt them in response to that learning.

I believe it is important to explain the approach I take to information or information system activities since, whether or not a project is to continue on to information needs analysis (broadly as argued by Galliers 1988 and Wilson 1984, but without the Maltese Cross), some of the organisational change actions identified at the gap analysis stage will inevitably relate to information or information systems. It is important that these activities remain as part of the overall project of organisational change, ie on the same critical path. There is a danger that the information systems projects and the organisational change initiatives are not linked and diverge on two separate learning curves so that, despite the effort to plan holistically using SSM, the information systems which are developed do not match the organisational need.

From my experience the gap analysis stage gives a good indication of the degree to which shared understanding was achieved during the ‘below the line’ systems thinking. If the participants struggle with the gap analysis, requiring me to introduce debate about where are we weak in this area, where are we strong, or what are we really trying to achieve here, then the shared vision for the future probably is not very strong. However, sometimes the best way to strengthen that understanding is to progress through the gap analysis.

Cultural understanding plays an important role throughout the SSM process, and especially at the gap analysis stage in deciding what action should be taken, from a range of alternatives, and this relates not only to the culture of the participants, but also of their clients.

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### **APPENDIX 3**

#### **PUBLICATIONS BY ELIZABETH PATTISON**

The use of Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) by the researcher evolved over a ten year period, 1984 - 1994, based on continual use of the approach for consultancy assignments, including the two case studies which form the basis for this research. The learning experiences have been reflected in teaching undertaken in SSM at Curtin University as well as in the publications shown below (in reverse date order):

Galliers, R D, Pattison, E M, & Reponen, T, 1994, "Strategic information systems planning workshops: Lessons from three cases", *International Journal of Information Management*, 14, pp 51-66.

Pattison, E M, & Williamson, V, 1992, "Strategic planning for universities - A process for coping with change", *The Practising Manager*, 12(2), pp 25-29.

Pattison, E M, & Williamson, V, 1993 "Dealing with change: the learning organisation", in *"Sharing the challenges: Library technicians in the 1990s"*, Bailey, J (ed), Adelaide, Auslib Press, pp 131-138.

Pattison, E M, & Williamson, V, 1992 "Organisational culture, structures and styles: The impact of new technologies" in Chen, C C (ed), *New information technology: Proceedings of the 5th international conference*, Weston Newton, Mass, MicroUse Information, pp 295-300.

Pattison, E M, 1991, "Cost benefit analysis: The dangers of valuing the technology and not the information", in *Does Western Australia have the potential to be an information society?*, Proceedings of a seminar, October 25 1991, Perth, LISWA Research Series No. 2.

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Galliers, R D, Klass, D K, Levy, M & Pattison, E M, 1991, "Effective strategy formulation using decision conferencing and soft systems methodology", in R K Stamper (ed), *Collaborative Work, Social Communications and Information Systems, Proceedings of the IFIP TC8 Working Conference, "COSCIS '91"*, Helsinki, Finland, 27-29 August, North-Holland, pp 157-179.

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## APPENDIX 4

### INTERVIEWS WITH SSM CONSULTANTS

Five interviews with SSM consultants/researchers were conducted in the UK in September 1993. The aim of the interviews was to gain a wider perspective on the research themes. The five consultants/researchers were selected by reviewing the literature and speaking with UK academics to identify people whose experience would assist my research. The people involved were:

- Dr Chris Atkinson, University of Manchester
- Professor Peter Checkland, Lancaster University
- Elaine Cole, Management Consultant
- Mike Haynes, Management Consultant
- Dr Jim Scholes, Management Consultant

The interviews were based around the following three questions:

- In projects where a change in Weltanschauungen occurs, what factors contribute to that change?
- What is the role of the facilitator?
- In what manner is SSM applied?

To give context to the responses to these questions, it was also important for me to understand a little of the background and philosophy of each interviewee.

All interviewees gave generously of their time and interviews ranged between 3 hours and a full day. All debated the questions in depth and willingly gave “inside” information on their projects and methodologies.

The results of the interviews are presented below:

#### Dr Chris Atkinson

- **Background & Philosophy of Interviewee**

Atkinson was introduced to Systems Thinking via the Open University.

Atkinson is interested in methodology and philosophy. He has questioned “what is the root metaphor behind systems”, and especially beyond the Checkland view of systems.

Atkinson is concerned about the concept of dysfunctionality, since he believes all Lancaster SSM work assumes there is functionality in any human activity system. Atkinson prefers the view that rules are emergent properties of the people within a system, i.e mutually generated and prescribed sets of rules between people. *This view allows processes to be viewed as purposeful but not functional (eg war, child abuse).* Such processes persist.

Atkinson emphasised that the systems model is only one tool. There are many others, including metaphors of cooperation, a cooperative, a mutual community, conflictual systems - all

interacting within a domain. Some are short lived, some go on for hundreds of years. For example, parliament is not a viable system in the normal context.

Atkinson used the example of healthcare and hospitals to demonstrate further his systems concepts. He views healthcare as a system domain rather than a monolithic system. In healthcare the functionalist image of organisations does not work, and especially taking into consideration the different groups in a hospital. The Weltanschauungen of administrators and clinicians are fundamentally different. The interventionist must mediate between these before moving into organisational change strategies.

Atkinson demonstrated a generic model (based on Checkland's work) for use within healthcare projects. The model encompasses principles of resource management, devolved clinical management and quality management and is on three levels:

- Resource Management
- Clinical Group
- Individual

The models provide the basis for evaluation, but Atkinson emphasised that the process will inevitably be political.

#### • The Role of the Facilitator

Atkinson, in taking the role of consultant or facilitator views himself as the person who does the structured thinking behind a project.

Atkinson explained that the role of consultant is often that of using counselling skills in a therapeutic process (eg pre-workshop interviews). The power of the facilitator is the power of the therapist - but this in itself is a problem, and a more neutral, equitable stance is preferable. However, as evidenced in Atkinson's health information systems project, the facilitator cannot be an objective observer - political levers are pulled and inevitably there is some element of manipulation by the facilitator.

Atkinson added that the facilitator's ability to communicate effectively and help people is important. He uses both empathy and rationalistic approaches within projects. The relationship between the facilitator and the client group is critical.

Atkinson uses pre-workshop interviews to build empathy. He believes this is essential because of the downloading of negative emotions/perceptions which occurs, and it may be necessary to spend some time resolving these before workshop sessions begin.

#### • Factors contributing to Organisational Change

Atkinson likened an organisational change project to group therapy, where individuals subjugate themselves to the group, but are then reborn.

Taking the example of family therapy, in an organisational project it is often beneficial to introduce metaphors of extreme dissonance to reveal to the participants the inconsistencies of their behaviour.

Atkinson emphasised that we must take into account the range of motivations, from rational to emotional, and the impact of peer pressure in a group. Interpersonal and individual issues are important.

Atkinson added that the process of evaluation is one important way by which an organisation develops.

### **Professor Peter Checkland**

- **Background and Philosophy of Interviewee**

This is well documented in the SSM literature, however, Checkland revisited the following history and concepts in the interview:

During the organisation development (OD) era in ICI any change was considered to be better than being locked solid, but there was no methodological structuring for what they were doing - no intellectual structure. They did have good facilitators, however.

OD and the corporate planning department have both been discredited in organisations because they are too inflexible. Rather organisations need to find a way to build in processes that ensure continued learning.

The world is problematical and complex. However, the process of enquiry can be organised as a system, using a systemic process of enquiry. Therefore, models developed should not be models of bits of the real world. When using SSM, the language of “holons” is helpful, i.e. “Make a holon relevant to ...”. This tends to make it clearer that it is not the real world which is being modelled.

In the hospital information systems project Checkland developed an initial holon at the beginning of the project. Later generic holons were developed of the hospital as provider and of the core basic support functions (eg radiology). The working groups then updated these models without the involvement of the consultant team. The measure of what was learned can be seen by comparing the first holon and the later generic holons.

From a theoretical perspective both a CATWOE and Root Definition should be developed. The CATWOE tends to be reductionist. Writing out the concept of the system as a whole via the Root Definition is more holistic.

There are three levels of Root Definition:

- Do x
- Do x by y
- Do x by y in order to achieve z  
(the most insightful level)

The last decade has seen the reinventing of SSM as a sense making device. However, many people outside Lancaster are stuck with the early 1970s SSM thinking of a 7 stage process to be followed.

Participation is the richest way to use SSM.

An organisation is itself a problematical concept.

- **The Role of the Facilitator**

Checkland referred to Chris Atkinson's analysis (Atkinson 1986, p 27) which concluded that methodology is not technique; the use of SSM depends on the style of consultant and the style of organisation. Atkinson named Brian Wilson's style as "professional" (a consultant working to a client's project requirements). In contrast, Atkinson saw Checkland's style as "liberal" (a guide and teacher), which Checkland described as "letting it emerge with the people themselves".

Checkland added that in interviews people generally are prepared to be very explicit and provide sensitive information which cannot be used openly.

- **What Causes Organisational Change?**

Checkland used examples from projects to illustrate how changes in thinking occur:

- a) In a health project, questioning the C of CATWOE caused a realisation that the purchaser is the customer, not the patient. This crystallised thinking.
- b) In an ICI project reviewing the role of the Library, changed thinking was not so readily accepted. Three ICI people carried out the study and Checkland provided facilitation. The users became very committed to SSM. Once the three ICI people had made their presentation to management, Checkland was asked to present "A look to the future". He highlighted changes which were occurring:

Technical: The cost of computing was falling.

Social: People are no longer prepared to accept hierarchical authority.

Therefore there is a need for a networked organisation linked by technology, and Checkland predicted the role of Information Director would emerge. This was in 1978. Yet Checkland highlighted that in the 1990s there has hardly been any progress towards this, anywhere. Checkland suspects the reason is that information is organisationally feared as a corporate resource, since information equals power.

- c) A health industry project was carried out for South Humberside - a purchasing authority and a new organisation which had recruited new people from other districts. The CEO had a strong vision of health promotion and created alliances, eg with Water Boards. The CEO wanted an information strategy.

The conclusion was reached that an information function was needed which is not the IT function. The IT person had initiated the project, but it was realised that a conceptual thinker was needed for the information function, and that this function should be built on the existing library function. However, it was seen as a threat that a Director would be responsible for information.

Information requirements have to be constantly rethought, based on continuous organisational learning, and learning models.



- d) In another Humberside project Checkland believes a change in Weltanschauungen did occur based on an acceptance at Director and Manager level of a different conceptualisation, i.e.

From the 4 processes: Needs, Ill health, Health promotion, Management improvement (based on earlier work of Mike Haynes)

To the processes: Strategy, Commissioning, Monitoring Output, Outcomes.

The crucial point was the acceptance at Director and Manager level of this conceptualisation. They now talk this language.

- e) In another health project organisational change occurred at a meeting where the facilitators were not present. This meeting between GPs and hospital consultants was a settling of old scores ("blood on the walls meeting"), and resulted in radical change in the thinking of the consultants.

Using the health information systems example, characteristics of organisations which embrace change appear to be:

- Money available from outside to do the project.
- The desire to use SSM.
- The personal agenda of the sponsor, ie the need to be seen to take initiatives.
- Endorsement of the project by the Chief Executive, eg a pep talk to initiate the project; ensuring that the key people become involved. (CEO support is important IF he is highly respected in the organisation.)
- The consultant relentlessly driving the process and ensuring deadlines are met. (People in the working groups then know the project will have a finite end.)
- Making projects fun.

### Elaine Cole

- **Background of Interviewee**

Cole recently completed a Masters degree with distinction, based on SSM projects undertaken with Checkland at Lancaster University. Cole has since carried out a number of management consultancy projects using SSM.

- **The Role of the Facilitator**

Cole describes her style as one of facilitating - not overtly leading. She believes in empowerment of the participants in a project, and her role is to be a catalyst.

Cole's is not an aggressive style and she fears that such an approach could lead to damage if not handled properly. She emphasised that people must own, see, believe, and not be made to feel ridiculous. People must believe they have the ideas. It is important for people to be encouraged and praised for what they are achieving in the rethinking process.

Cole sees herself in projects as transferring the engine of change from herself into the organisation, releasing talents in some people and highlighting others who are stumbling blocks.

However, Cole does not like to be introduced to participants as the change agent (this has occurred), as she is concerned that people see this as threatening.

People buy consultancy from people they trust - whether for business planning or building a house.

Workshops are a useful means to bring people together who do not normally work together.

People usually know what the issues are, but need to think about them differently.

Finally, in a letter from a client, Cole was thanked for her patience, understanding and commitment - an indication of the client's view of her style.

- **Factors contributing to organisational change**

Cole used the example of a project with a media products group to highlight her understanding of how organisational change had occurred:

The project sponsor (senior executive) had identified that of the five Divisions, one Division was not in the same paradigm, ie not "go getting", *market oriented, commercial - rather it was more conservative and negative*. Hence the business overall was not achieving to its full potential.

The project required going straight into the value systems and culture. (There was not really a business problem.)

The first stage of the project was a six day period in which Cole assessed the situation via interviews. It became obvious that senior people had clear direction, a 5 year plan and mission statement. However, the line managers were not in tune with the 5 year plan and its ramifications for their part of the business.

The conclusions from this six day assessment were therefore that the business was doing well financially, but parts of the organisation were not working together effectively. There was no clear shared vision and hence no planning by many parts of the organisation. The organisation could be doing better - the full potential was not being achieved.

The pre-workshop interviews were confidential and only themes were reported to the project sponsor. The floodgates opened at these interviews. Cole believes this is a useful process of letting off steam to someone outside. Then in the workshops the baggage has been left behind.

A series of 2 day strategy workshops were then held, with overt use of SSM. Workshop 1 involved 20 people from one functional area, Workshop 2 involved 10 people from another functional area. As a result of these workshops it is now part of the culture to go away for 2 days for planning sessions.

In the first workshop the planning process was explained, but this was not very well received. Cole then decided not to explain SSM in further workshops.

The head of the group involved in the first workshop stated that it was necessary to get out of the current channels of thinking - to blue sky.

Cole loosened up the group by pairing up the participants, giving them household objects and asking them to think of other unusual uses for them.

The Oxfam example was then used to introduce thinking about “what business are we in?”.

The group then developed for their own business - issues, CATWOE and conceptual models.

At the end of the first day there was a low ebb. Most participants were not understanding where the models were leading. Over dinner there was debate on high level issues. Overnight Cole developed a model based on these issues. This was the turning point in the project - “switched the light on”.

On Day 2 syndicate groups were used to get to grips with the business. There was such enthusiasm that Cole received a standing ovation at the end of the workshop.

The change in W was that the group initially thought of themselves as a flow system - a mechanistic view. They change to see themselves as creatively deciding what the products will be.

There were early objections from some that the business was doing well, and that it would be dangerous to distract people to spend time in planning. In fact as a result of the planning profits increased.

It is important to realise that people going through change have to run their business at the same. The change initiatives are extra curricula activities.

The client did not want a report. Rather wanted to see things happening.

After Workshop 1, the participants appeared to have changed based on comments by their colleagues, i.e. “You’ve changed”.

Cole also discussed characteristics of organisations which achieve organisational change. Her view is that it is all down to the people - the quality of the thinking and the positions they are in.

The learning organisation has the capacity to evaluate what they are achieving in organisational change terms.

### **Mike Haynes**

- **Background and Philosophy**

Haynes explained that he became interested in SSM because as a senior manager he was dissatisfied with his ability to deal with politics and human issues. He discovered systems thinking via the Open University.

He gave an overview of his use of SSM:

SSM is used in different ways on different projects, or for different clients, eg mode 1 (Checkland 1981) use in Health; mode 2 (Checkland & Scholes 199) in ICI. The reasons are:

The Health Service want to be involved in the process. ICI just want results. There is more of a research ethic in Health. The research ethic in ICI is purely for product development not for new ways of thinking. However, in ICI using a known methodology (ie SSM) is important.

The ICI work tends to focus on environmental and business issues and difficult to solve organisational problems.

Haynes is using SSM “in the back of the mind”, recognising the Weltanschauungen. SSM may be very hidden. He emphasised there is no standard approach for a project. What is appropriate for the client is decided jointly. It is important to understand early how to interact with the client - what the client wants.

He may or may not use workshops. The approach to a project is to hold several sessions to define the area of work, make sure the real issue is being addressed, and decide how the project will operate.

Often Haynes will do a one day session to see what happens (ie scoping, focussing, highlighting, divergent thinking, models).

Haynes emphasised that interviews are important both pre-project and pre-workshops. The pre-workshop interviews enable the consultant to get an idea of different Weltanschauungen, plus once the workshops begin the participants will feel they know the facilitator and have established a relationship.

Pre-workshop interviews also provide a gauge of the scale of unhappiness of an organisation, i.e. how long it takes participants to tell Haynes their concerns.

Haynes believes SSM is a learning system for clients and consultants, and he is more and more convinced that SSM is a useful approach in this time of complexity and change.

He may or may not talk about SSM. (“Some people want the jargon”.) However, he does not use the term Root Definitions, rather Statements or Mission Statements. He uses CATWOE, and will run two Statements and models in parallel, very iteratively.

He believes both SSM and conceptual models are non threatening.

- **The Role of the Facilitator**

Haynes believes that as a facilitator he is playing the role of trusted consultant, message carrier, and personal adviser (depending on the client and project). Clients are looking for someone who is not a subject specialist. What is offered is intangible.

On different projects the role can be anything from just facilitate to totally decide the answers.

Haynes believes it is the responsibility of the consultant to manage any conflicts, and he is very sensitive to this issue. The consultant must deal with conflict as best as possible, recognising

that conflict is an invaluable learning situation. People are expressing different viewpoints when conflict erupts.

- **Factors Contributing to Organisational Change**

Haynes admitted that he is not sure on this question. A combination of things are involved. Interpersonal skills of the facilitator and SSM are both critical, but communication is all.

At the end of an ICI project Haynes was told, “Mike, you’ve completely changed the way I think about this job”.

Haynes added that the facilitator’s style is critically important, i.e.:

- Openness - The ability to get people to be open by being open.
- Getting people to tell stories (and know when to close the notebook).
- Empathy with the needs of the people with whom you work.
- Using challenges at the right time - knowing when to be blunt. Being streetwise.

Haynes illustrated the last point by explaining that on one project together he and Checkland had used a slide “the bad news” to convey anonymous statements of concern about the organisation. This had a dramatic impact. It opened up a debate and territory which the participants had been avoiding. It was a watershed.

However, for Haynes challenging people to the point of making them uncomfortable is rare. He likes to use humour.

He believes that change in thinking may occur via a soft approach, eg via models, or by a blunt approach, or change may occur over a period of time, achieving a gradual shift in values.

For some clients being holistic is key to the change process, for others it is exploring different viewpoints (Weltanschauungen), and for others, the models.

Haynes added that the keys to a successful project are:

- Presentation
- Meeting deadlines
- Meeting client needs
- Understanding how the client wants to work
- Being flexible.

### **Dr Jim Scholes**

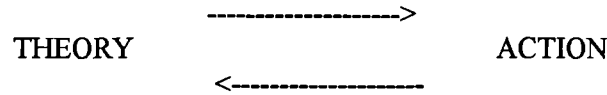
- **Background and Philosophy**

Scholes’ experience of organisational change at ICL led him to the conclusion that we should never underestimate what is involved in turning an organisation around.

Scholes emphasised that an important factor in the ICL situation was that he was on the inside of the problem situation, which is not the same as a consultant having a good relationship with the client. In the ICL situation Scholes described how he would “stagger out” of the problem

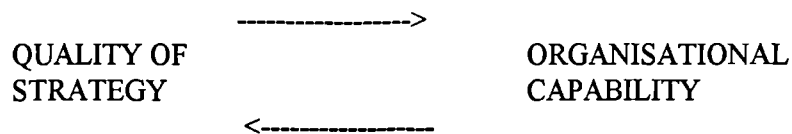
situation to meet with Checkland to reflect on the learning situation, and then step back in again. Scholes was not taught systems thinking, but learned by being in the system.

Taking the social science view of:



then, Scholes was introduced to SSM at the point of Action.

Scholes' consultancy work uses SSM to develop business strategy. He believes that strategy and organisational development must be interlinked, ie:



The challenge is to take people in at the point of developing the ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY so they can learn and rethink STRATEGY. *But both must happen simultaneously.*

For the debate of big issues early in a project, “fact based” is more useful than “opinion based”. There must be preparation in advance with real numbers, perhaps using a business analyst. Alternately a briefing pack can be prepared and given to participants to work on and arrive at their own conclusions - so they can tell the consultant. A discussion can then occur based on “Which few things would really undermine our ability to do business?”.

The same intellectual framework and principles are used for a project, regardless of the organisation's culture. However, the form of implementation varies. *(Scholes' approach is not “off the shelf”).*

- **The Role of the Facilitator**

Scholes, as a consultant helping companies change, recognises that he is not neutral. He has a particular, explicit point of view, eg.

- British companies typically rationalised the pressure of Japanese competition as an unfair advantage. They tended not to see the problem that they were not managing too well.
- Scholes believes the real competition is between different ways of thinking (and especially the management team and how it chooses to think).
- To compete managers must change the way they think.

From Scholes' perspective, the role of consultant is not one of facilitator. This can be the role at the beginning of a project, but it is important to let go of the facilitator role and let people in

the organisation take on this responsibility. The consultant must coach others to become change agents (recognising that in some respects they will not be as neutral, will have more vested interests, than an outsider).

The consultant must “do what works” within any project.

The role of consultant as Coach, recognises that the consultant would have played the game before (and is therefore not neutral), but this time the team is playing the game.

The role of consultant can also be as Catalyst. In this case the consultant brings a specific experience to the project (in Scholes’ case the ICL situation). This is not necessarily a wider experience but one which is specifically relevant to the client organisation. The consultant can therefore “share where they’ve been”.

- **Factors Contributing to Organisational Change**

To answer this question, Scholes used the example of one of his projects with a technology company where the view of what the core business is changed radically.

The company did not have a pressing problem, but decided to start now to rethink what the future should be like. A group of senior managers were the catalysts for the project (The Change Team). These managers had been meeting informally before the project began to discuss the need for organisational change, and to push for this project. Their interest was accepted as legitimate by the organisation.

Aspects of the culture of the organisation were:

- A successful command and control style of management from the corporate executive.
- Senior people had a bright, but inflexible mindset (and therefore it was a bold move to take a participative approach to the project).
- People in the organisation were good communicators.

Scholes and his partner developed a programme to involve the top 150 managers from around the world in strategy development (ie to rethink the future). Specifically the 150 were not the corporate planners or the corporate executive.

An internal team of “consultants” was established to manage the project. Since these people act as technology consultants to client organisations they thought they knew about systems. In fact they knew about method, but not methodology, which caused difficulties for the project. They confused systematic execution with systemic. To overcome this a slogan was developed, “Think systemically, act systematically”. Some people eventually knew the difference.

The process for the project involved five waves (with about thirty people in each). However the 150 involved linked back to a wider group, so that in all 1500 people were involved.

Each wave concentrated on a different issue, ie

Wave 1:

Major discontinuities which face the information industry over the next 10 years.

Waves 2 & 3:

Core competencies based on discontinuities.

Wave 4:

White space opportunities (between the current Strategic Business Units).

Wave 5:

What do we have to change? Paradigms preventing us from making change.

Each wave depended on the other, and outcomes were synthesised back to the executive.

Within each wave the first step was a one week workshop. The problem was that the participants incorrectly thought of this week as a training programme, or the entire project process. In fact the aim of the week was to expand mindset and hence influence behaviour. During this week a new future was rehearsed. The participants were taken out of their day-to-day experience - "stress them out".

Participants were asked to identify the big issues, (ie which few things would really undermine our ability to do business) and then the actual facts (hard data, pre-prepared) were used to push the boundaries of thinking. The participants were in an unusual situation and under pressure. They were made to realise inappropriate responses and inappropriate behaviour; made to over-react and then understand which type of behaviour is inappropriate.

All sessions were harsh (not neutral); the facilitator versus them - set them up and then feed in the real information. This resulted in the consultants getting "beaten up", and the participants complaining that they were not given enough time.

The consultant is in fact doing his best to keep them honest - make them face the facts. It is critical that the existing frame of thinking is challenged.

Case studies were used, but not management games.

It was necessary to first get to grips with the turbulence in the industry, and Scholes was surprised how few of the top 150 spent time analysing their industry. There was no shared view of the top 5 issues.

Integration between the waves was intended to be the responsibility of Coaches provided by the internal consultancy team, but these were rejected by the participants (as knowing little about the process, and no more about the content than the participants). In fact, integration was carried out by people in the role of Link Pins, who emerged automatically.

Characteristics of Link Pins are difficult to identify. However, they were all enthusiastic believers in the need for change, and self selecting. The Link Pins coordinated subgroups within the waves; they did the actual work on the topic.

The process then was:



- The workshop week.
- Work on the topic by the Link Pins and subgroups.
- Reconvene the wave to discuss progress.
- Further work by the Link Pins.
- Discussion of findings with the Change Team (ie the project sponsors).
- Discussion of findings with the Board (the Leadership Council). These people were concerned half way through the project when they realised they had lost control of strategy formulation. They became outnumbered by a larger number of people who had been through a learning experience. This was healthy, and they came to terms with the situation in the end, endorsed the new strategy, and eventually owned it.

Any project can be mapped (like a mood thermometer), where each stage indicates the phases people go through, what people learn, what behaviour will be seen.

In organisational change projects the percentages are important, i.e. the number of people on-side. If there are one-third who believe, that is enough. Typically one-third will sit on the fence but eventually join in to some degree. One-third never will. It is important to know who are the believers, and who will never join in.

Scholes believes that organisations that do try to change are self selecting.

At the low point in a project (the dip in the mood thermometer), typically a person “explodes”. At the same time people gather around the new cause, and the peer group deals with the person (who then does not lose face). Typically the person joins the new cause, but alternatively may “leave” the project or the organisation.

Scholes emphasised: Organisational change is not painless.

## APPENDIX 5

### THE CASE STUDIES

Outlined below is the story of the case studies, recounted in the first person to acknowledge the facilitator's subjectivity in the understanding of what happened. The evolution of SSM as applied to the case studies is discussed in Appendix 2.

Both case studies were carried out at the Crown Law Department (CLD - also referred to in the Case Studies as "the Department"), a Western Australian government agency. Case Study 1, the Corporate Services Review, took place between September and November 1992. Case Study 2, the Library Review, occurred between October 1992 and January 1993.

At the time of the case studies CLD reported to a Minister, the Attorney General, and had a total staff of 967, excluding Judiciary. While administrative support was provided by CLD to the Judiciary, the Judges and Magistrates are a separate arm of government and did not report to CLD but to parliament. Similarly complex reporting arrangements applied to other programmes within CLD, where even though administratively the programmes were accountable to the Chief Executive Officer, CLD, the policy aspect of the programme reported directly to the Minister. These other programmes were the Crown Solicitor's Office, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Parliamentary Counsel's Office, Office of State Corporate Affairs, and Guardianship & Administration Board.

The mission of CLD recognised this service relationship to the courts and legal programmes, and at the time of the case studies was worded as:

*Mission:*

*To ensure the courts and the government are able to provide the people of Western Australia with an independent, responsive and efficient system of justice where all are equal before the law.*

The projects were not approached as PhD case studies, but as *normal business consultancy* projects. It was only at the conclusion of the projects that I asked permission to use the work as case studies for my PhD. I believe this is important since participants' behaviour was not altered because the projects were to be used for PhD research. However, it may be that my behaviour was modified because of my research focus and I will consider this aspect as I tell the story of the case studies. The concern to learn from "real" business projects was also reflected in the University of Lancaster's decision to carry out research in consultancy mode in order to gain access to real problem situations, although in their case they did declare the research objective in advance (Checkland, 1990, p 280).

#### Case Study 1: Crown Law Department (CLD), Corporate Services Review

Case Study 1 relates to Corporate Services, which when the project began had 146 employees and was responsible for:

Administrative Services (typically tasks which did not seem to fit elsewhere, and had therefore ended up in Corporate Services, eg bond administration, criminal injuries compensation)

Financial Services

Human Resources

Information Technology

Internal Audit

Management Services (an organisation and methods type focus)

Planning & Policy

### **The Reason for the Review**

In June 1992 I was approached by Neil Hunter, Human Resources Manager CLD, to assist Corporate Services Division to carry out an organisation review, ie a review of the mission, activities and structure.

Three project planning meetings took place during the following four weeks, involving Neil Hunter, who was to be project manager, and Glen Coffey, project sponsor (Head of Corporate Services and Assistant Under Secretary for Law). A project plan was documented and agreed at a meeting with Don Doig (Chief Executive Officer of CLD, with the title Under Secretary for Law).

The perceptions I gained during this initial period were:

- Over the last 2 years CLD had used a process of organisation reviews and restructures as a means of refocussing the Department to meet external pressures in the justice system. (These pressures are further explored during the project.) Glen Coffey and Neil Hunter believed that these reviews had resulted in significant, and appropriate, changes in direction and culture.
- Corporate Services had deliberately been left as the last area to be reviewed, since the rest of CLD are the clients of Corporate Services and it was considered that the review of Corporate Services should be in response to the new directions of these client areas. As such, there was no stated “urgent problem to be solved”, but an opportunity to realign to become more effective, and this fact was emphasised during the project planning meetings. (This contrasts with frequent use of SSM with a “problem situation focus”, eg Checkland 1981, Davies and Ledington 1992.)
- Corporate Services, via the Human Resources Branch, had assisted all these other reviews and wanted to incorporate what they had learnt in their own review. The principle learning experience had been the importance of participation from all stakeholders, and especially the employees of the area being reviewed. However, this had been by interview, requests for written input, and small group meetings, rather than a participative workshop process as was used for the case studies.

- My role was to be two fold. Firstly, as adviser on the approach to be used for the review, and secondly, as facilitator of workshop sessions. (My title in the formal project planning document was shown as “Facilitator”.)
- It seemed that Glen Coffey had selected me on the basis of my previous involvement with CLD, which had apparently given them confidence in my ability to meet the required role. I had worked with Glen Coffey on two previous occasions. In 1988 (when Glen Coffey was Computer Services Manager) I had been involved in two CLD information planning studies, one in which I project managed a 6 month planning study for information systems for the Courts, and another relating to CLD administrative information systems. Then in 1990 (when Glen had been promoted to the position of Assistant Under Secretary for Law) I had been asked to provide project management and report writing assistance to the final stages of what had been a lengthy organisation review of Court Services within Magistrates Courts (ie the administrative role).

I was keen to provide the assistance requested, since my experience was that CLD were one of the most enjoyable groups with which to work based on their team spirit, and because I perceived CLD Corporate Services was a “learning organisation” constantly looking for ways to improve.

The project was launched on 1st September 1992 and the workshop phase (the major part of my involvement) concluded at the end of November 1992. However, Corporate Services carried on with further work after this time to develop organisation structures, job descriptions, classifications, etc.

My involvement was part-time and involved 165 hours from initial project planning in June 1992 to conclusion of the workshops at the end of November 1992.

## Methodology

Methodology was never formally discussed during project planning; however, I was aware from my previous involvement with Glen Coffey that projects were expected to involve a participative approach with vigorous questioning and debate about such fundamentals as “what are we trying to achieve” and “what should we change”, which was consistent with SSM thinking.

Not exposing the organisation to the methodology is a major shift from my early use of SSM in the mid 1980s, and my progression here seems to be mirrored by the Lancaster SSM researchers. (Checkland, 1991, p 221)

CLD had some early involvement with SSM in the mid 1980s via an external consultant, when preliminary information planning work had been carried out for the entire CLD and Courts. However, this had been early days for SSM in Perth, and while conceptual models had been used extensively, the project had not been very participative, nor had there been rigorous questioning of CATWOE.

SSM, or its terminology, were not discussed during my project. However, by the end of the project a number of the managers, and especially Glen Coffey, had become very interested in the approach used. SSM was then discussed, and plans made to hold an SSM course for

Corporate Services so that the methodology could be incorporated in the Division's ongoing planning, projects and tasks.

During the project planning phase I was given the freedom to suggest how the project should be carried out, and developed the project plan based on my experiences with SSM. My suggestions were then developed into a formal project plan document which was required to be written using the same framework as had been used for previous CLD reviews, i.e.

- Background
- Objectives of the Review
- Terms of Reference
- Roles & Responsibilities of Respective Parties
- Philosophy
- Timeframe
- The Review Process

Important aspects of the project plan from a methodology perspective are:

The Objective "To define the role, objectives, structure and key strategies for Corporate Services in order to satisfy cost effectively client and corporate needs" was sufficiently broad to fit in with an SSM approach. Preliminary discussions during the project planning phase confirmed to me that Glen Coffey and Neil Hunter did not have any fixed ideas about what the scope, boundary or role of Corporate Services should be - there were no "given" solutions.

The Philosophy statement was strongly participative, i.e.

Philosophy:

A participative approach will be used for the review in order to involve service providers and clients in meeting the objectives of this review.

The aim will be to ensure ownership of the results by Corporate Services staff, leading to successful implementation of the review's recommendations.

The major analysis work for the review was to be carried out in a series of workshops.

Participation was to be achieved via a Working Party, which would attempt to be representative of all levels and functional areas, and would participate in the workshops. At Glen Coffey's request, all four Corporate Services Managers, and Glen himself, were members of the Working Party, which I believed showed a high degree of commitment to the process from Glen Coffey. (As a result of this commitment there were never any problems with participants missing workshops.)

Each member of Corporate Services was linked to someone in the Working Party as a means for those outside the Working Party to provide input and feedback for workshops.

I later learnt that the concept of involving the entire organisation, which I had used before on a project at Murdoch University Library, had also been used by Checkland in the Shell MF study, where all 600 members were involved (Checkland and Scholes, 1990, p 279).

The workshops and this method of participation had not been used previously by CLD. On reflection, I believe that the approach goes beyond simply being a participative approach (ie where people have the opportunity to participate) to a style which would be better named “devolved decision-making”. Not only were the Working Party members being given an opportunity to participate, but they were being given the authority to make all the decisions required within the project.

The process to be used within the workshops was loosely built on the SSM 7 step approach (Checkland 1984), although there were elements of Checkland and Scholes’ revised SSM (1990). (This is analysed further in Chapter 8.)

The project reported to a steering committee, as is the usual practice for projects in the Western Australian public sector. The steering committee was chaired by the Under Secretary for Law. However, the most meaningful interaction with the Steering Committee members occurred outside the formal meetings, which were merely used to ratify progress and recommendations.

### **The Progress of the Case Study**

#### **The Launch**

The project was launched on 1st September 1992 with a short presentation to all staff. The aim of the presentation was to create an atmosphere of open communication about the project, introduce the facilitator, explain how the participative process would work, and provide an opportunity for questions. (The project plan was also made available to all staff.)

Glen Coffey, Neil Hunter and I spoke at the launch. I briefly discussed participation, the role of the Working Party, the process of workshops and interviews, involvement of clients, and emphasised that the project was an opportunity to create a challenging and exciting future for Corporate Services and its employees.

Glen and Neil were very positive in their short presentations and had carefully planned their message.

I found the launch somewhat disappointing, with few questions and little obvious enthusiasm. However, apparently there had been more discussion later in the Corporate Services branches, and several branches found it necessary to conduct a vote to choose representatives for the Working Party as there were too many volunteers.

The branches were keen to have all aspects of their service functions represented on the Working Party. The result was seventeen members for the Working Party - more than I had anticipated. This provided an added challenge for the facilitator role as I believe twelve participants at a workshop to be the maximum to achieve fast interaction and full participation. However, I decided it was more important for the branches to be happy with their representation, than to make the job of the facilitator easier by reducing the number of participants. Only 2 of the participants were female.

#### **The Pre-Meetings**

During the week of the launch I interviewed each of the seventeen members of the working party in a one-on-one session, approximately an hour long. The aim of the interview was:

- To begin to build a rapport between myself and the Working Party members, hopefully to overcome members thinking at the first workshop - “Who is that woman? I’ll just sit tight and say as little as possible until I decide if I can trust her.”
- To give me a broad understanding of the responsibilities of the branches and the Working Party members.
- To give me an opportunity to get Working Party members thinking creatively about the future of Corporate Services.
- To explain again their role in the project, my role, and the process to be used. (This had been covered in the launch session and the project plan.)
- To enable me to begin to build a cultural understanding of Corporate Services, and specifically, to give me some understanding of the various Weltanschauungen held by the Working Party members, before the project, as an aid to establishing after the project whether there had been a shift in Weltanschauungen.

In conducting the interviews I endeavoured to listen and encourage as the interviewee answered questions. I frequently probed deeper for more information, but this was always done from the perspective, “I would like to understand more about this”, rather than implying that I was challenging what was being said. I believe it is very important in such interviews that I do not in any way imply that I disagree with the interviewee; and equally that I do not give my opinion on the responses. The challenge is to build empathy without showing any bias.

However, it was recognised that the interview process would have its own complications, in that

“... the nature of the social system is not likely to emerge in response to direct questions. Direct questions will probably receive as responses the official myths of the situation.” (Checkland and Scholes, 1990, p 49)

My own attempts at cultural understanding throughout the project (through observation and analysis of SSM process outputs), were always intended to supplement the information from the interviews.

The interview questions were based on the Competing Values Model (Faerman and Quin 1985) and Zammuto’s use of the model in order to measure organisational culture as a basis for understanding why some organisations are more successful than other in implementing automated manufacturing technologies (Zammuto, 1991).

The questions I adapted were:

Beliefs about:

- Organisational purpose
- Valued criteria of performance
- Evaluation
- Motivation
- The location of authority
- Legitimate bases of power
- Decision making orientations
- Style of leadership
- Compliance

I considered the first four items especially important in trying to understand Weltanschauungen, but recognised that the others would be important if the cultural change aimed for by CLD related to style rather than purpose. This in fact did turn out to be the situation, at least to some degree in Case Study 1, and quite significantly so in Case Study 2.

I had a lot of ground to cover in the one hour interview, which I especially did not want to make intimidating in view of the aim of building rapport. Also, the interviewees ranged from Level 1 clerical personnel to senior managers, and I needed to find a common set of questions and vocabulary. However, I had considerable previous experience in pre-workshop interviews in a number of other SSM assignments and had been refining my approach over several years.

For this case study I arrived at the following format and questions, which formed the basis of the interviews:

- My background:

I briefly explained about the type of work I do and how pleased I was to be working with CLD again.

- The project:

I briefly explained how participation would work; that the focus would be opportunities and not problems (any problem can be turned into an opportunity); and gave the interviewee a chance to ask questions.

- You and your job:

I invited interviewees to talk freely about:

- Their role, responsibilities, job description. (I have found this is always a good “opener” since most people like to talk about what they do.)
- Why their branch exists.
- Why their job exists.  
(I emphasised these were not meant to be threatening questions, ie I was not suggesting that the branch or job should not exist).
- How their job is changing, why it is changing, *plus any future changes anticipated.*
- How their branch’s performance is evaluated.
- How their own performance is evaluated, (and what is valued)
- Whose opinion matters in relation to their performance.
- What motivates them in regard to their job.
- How would they describe the style of leadership/management in their branch, and in Corporate Services.

Interviewees were told that no preparation was necessary for the interviews. Interview questions were not circulated in advance of the interviews (and interviewees were not given a written copy to pass on, although inevitably there would have been discussion amongst those who had, and those who had not yet been interviewed.)

An office was provided for the interviews, which meant that for most of the interviews the participant was out of their normal workplace and there were no interruptions.

At each interview I emphasised that the interviews were confidential, and took detailed notes.



Responses to the interview questions are summarised below:

a) Roles - Why Their Branch and Job Exists:

For many participants this was not an easy question to answer. Obviously it was not something which had been widely debated or challenged.

Many respondents did not differentiate very clearly between the reason for the branch and the reason for the job. To both perspectives there were three groupings of answers:

- The first grouping emphasised a supportive role, with words used such as:  
Understand, Facilitate, Provide Service,  
Provide Advice, Provide Support.
- The second grouping focused on a managing role in the more traditional sense, with words such as:  
Manage, Supervise, Coordinate, Guide,  
Set Standards, Plan, Make Sure.
- The third grouping was more authoritarian, using the words:  
Control, Give Direction.

I was fascinated by the extremes of specific responses to the question 'Why does your Branch exist?' i.e.

From a rather cynical "To give the people the jobs that nobody else wants", to an altruistic "To maximise the potential of the Department's human resources".

Similarly, "Why does your job exist?", resulted in responses from a pragmatic, "As a public servant I am paid to do whatever the government or public asks of me" ( from a Level 2 Clerk), to a contrasting view of "Image improvement."

b) Challenges/Changes: How their job is already changing, why it is changing, plus any future changes anticipated:

The question about changes occurring now and likely to occur in the future drew responses which tended to focus on today's challenges and the changes which should be made, rather than a forward looking perspective.

This question proved relatively easy for most participants to answer.

Seventeen items were identified. Significantly only four of these were outward looking and related to clients' needs. The rest had an inward focus, which on reflection I considered to be not surprising since the topic of the project was an organisation review, and the participants had not yet had chance to understand that the approach to the project would involve taking a wider, outward looking focus. The items are grouped below:

Outward Looking Challenges:

- Increasing demand and pressure from clients.
- Flexibility to meet the needs of judges.
- Complaints from clients.
- Need to achieve partnerships with our clients.

Inward Focus Challenges:

- The need to continue to question and review.
- More time to plan.
- Performance measurement needs improvement.
- Making Corporate Services into one group (currently disjointed).
- The expectation that we will devolve Corporate Services functions.
- Problems with information flow across Corporate Services.
- Rapidly changing technology and the steep learning curves involved for us.
- The competing demands of project control and daily interaction with clients (from an IT perspective).
- Providing feedback, recognition, praise, thanks to our employees.
- The need for career paths and promotion opportunities.
- The length of time required to get, train and induct new staff.
- Improving teamwork.
- Fighting off invaders for resources.

I gained the impression of a widespread hope that the Review would resolve some of the day-to-day staff management issues which were especially prevalent in some pockets of Corporate Services.

- c) Performance Evaluation: How their branch's performance is evaluated. How their own performance is evaluated (and what is valued). Whose opinion matters in relation to their performance:

Many interviewees had difficulty responding to this question and found it hard to differentiate between performance evaluation of the branch and of the individual. This was not surprising since, like most of the WA public sector, CLD at this time did not have an indepth personal performance evaluation programme. Corporate Services also did not have well developed and monitored performance measures for its activities. The answers were therefore quite wide ranging, i.e.:

- User satisfaction
- Complaints
- Use of our services
- Responsiveness (time to achieve 'x')
- Standards followed
- Information Technology systems meet objectives; are value for money; are within budget
- Feedback from other areas of the branch
- Self evaluation.

I interpreted these answers to indicate a reactive culture which aimed to please clients by meeting their requests for service.

From the perspective of “Whose Opinion Matters”, again there was a range of viewpoints from:

- The Executive
- Line Managers
- My Manager
- Branch Staff
- Programme Heads (ie Senior Clients)
- Clients
- Self

I found no clear message about culture in these replies.

d) Personal Motivation: What motivates them in regard to their job:

I realise that I could have been shaping perspectives by asking for positive views in this question, but this was quite deliberate. I chose to ask why they liked to come to work, rather than why they did not. Some people responded quickly and enthusiastically, others stumbled with this question and perhaps had not really considered what aspect of their job motivated them.

Responses were:

*[my groupings]*

- A Client Focus:
  - Love dealing with people.
  - Assisting people, solving their problems.
  - Client appreciation.
  - Achieving rapport with clients.
  - Users like the systems (IT branch).
- Team spirit:
  - Enjoy the people I work with.
  - Great team, good section, cohesive, happy.
  - Feeling involved.
  - Stir up the staff - make improvements, improve the team.
  - Accomplishing the vision of a happy branch, achieving goals and relating well together.
- The type of work:
  - Variety.
  - Interesting environment (the Courts).
  - Bringing about organisational change.
  - Challenge of trying to conquer everything we have to do (as well as keeping my Manager happy).
  - Information technology coming together and working.
  - Learning more about CLD and its challenges.

- The working environment:
  - Not being “tied to the desk”.
  - Enjoy responsibility - left to do our own thing (with guidance and support).
  - Autonomy.
- Basic need:
  - Money.  
(Few actually said this.)

I gained the impression of a dominant culture where working together as a team with flexibility as to how to meet client needs was important to job satisfaction.

- e) Management/Leadership Style: How would they describe the style of leadership/management in their Branch, and in Corporate Services:

This question caused no hesitation and was quickly and forcefully answered. I concluded that this is a topic which is discussed informally.

Eleven of the interviewees gave positive responses, i.e.  
*[my groupings]*

- Overall emotive response to management style:
  - Great.
  - A dream.
  - Ideal.
  - Management are generally trying to do the right thing.
- Participation:
  - Participative.
  - Open.
  - Consensus decision-making.
  - People given a choice.
- Attitude to Employees:
  - Caring.
  - Always acknowledge you and stop and have a chat.
  - Helpful and supportive.
  - Faith and encouragement.
  - Good feedback.
- Manner:
  - Friendly, relaxed, easy to get on with.
  - Approachable.
  - No rank imposed.
- Management Team-Spirit:
  - No conflict between managers - no ill feeling.
  - No bad guys.

- Balance:
  - Good balance between goal achievement and people orientation.
- Skills as Functional Managers:
  - Strong.
  - Professional.
  - Controlled environment, well planned, realistic goals, management know where they're going.
  - Clear indication of your role, job, responsibilities, and what's expected of you.
  - Management give us the authority to go ahead and operate.
  - Coordinated approach from Don and Glen through to junior staff (amazing - never seen anything like it.)
  - Management are willing to be decisive and not "passing the buck".
  - Management not creating stumbling blocks.
- External focus:
  - Promote what Corporate Services does.

In contrast, six of the interviewees gave a negative response:

- Overall emotional response to management style:
  - Them and us.
  - Favouritism, jobs for the boys, the purple circle.
  - Not everybody knows what Don and Glen look like.
- Participation:
  - Ideas from the top without much participation.
  - Autocratic (theoretically consultative, practically - not).
  - Inflexible - the way things have always been done.
  - Insufficient diversity of viewpoint.
  - Not consultative - cannot have a different view.
  - No discussion of alternatives.
  - Management need to get out and consult more.
  - Not enough communication coming down the line.
- Attitude to employees:
  - Intimidation, not encouragement.
- Manner:
  - Closed door - I don't know how to approach management.
- Management Team-Spirit:
  - Not working as a team.
- Skills as Functional Managers:
  - Decisions not always correctly made.
  - Erratic.
  - Not delegating.

The contrasting responses to this management style question led me to consider whether there was an indication here of a subculture within Corporate Services. If so the subculture holding the negative view of management was not in one branch, since the six negative responses came from people in four different branches (though none was in the Human Resources branch).

From observation, I realised that the people who were negative towards management tended to be the people who appeared to be outside the close team spirit and sense of family which I believe pervaded the Corporate Services culture. These people with negative views tended not to join in with team activities such as jogging at lunch time, or participate in the repartee which was so prevalent in the corridors and tea room.

For me it was important that the participants had showed no hesitation in forcefully expressing their negative viewpoints to the management style question. I interpreted this to mean that I had achieved some success in building rapport and trust.

From my perspective I believed the interviews had been useful in establishing empathy with the workshop participants. I was happy with the interviews and felt that the project had made a good start. However, this is not unusual, as I almost always feel this way after the pre-workshop interviews.

As with several other projects in other organisations I also found that interviewees were so trusting in the interviews that they shared with me quite sensitive information about their fears, frustrations and personality conflicts - even though I did not lead the interviewees to tell me the negatives about the organisation. Interviews with other SSM consultants also highlighted that they considered pre-workshop interviews to be critical to the success of projects, and that these interviews often elicited the same sensitive, soul-bearing responses. (See Appendix 4)

After the interviews I summarised the range of responses (while preserving the confidentiality of individual responses). This summary was reviewed at a meeting with Glen Coffey and Neil Hunter. Glen's reaction was to be a little hurt and disappointed about the negative responses, and to resolve to learn from this data and work harder as a manager to build team spirit. (I believe this was further evidence of CLD as a learning organisation.) Neil took a more philosophical stance and was happy that the positive responses outweighed the negative. I enjoyed the opportunity to give insightful feedback to management. As usual, my interpretation of the interview responses was not questioned in any way. I interpret this as evidence of the trust and power bestowed on the facilitator.

In SSM terms, the interviews were an important part of the investigation which underpins the Organisational Analysis and Synthesis stage (Galliers, 1985). They also represent the beginnings of the stream of cultural analysis emphasised in Checkland's revised representation of SSM (Checkland and Scholes, 1990).

### The Workshops

Electronic whiteboards were used for all workshops. Throughout the workshops I printed each screen and copies were made so that the working papers were on the table in front of the participants as they progressed through the analysis. There was also the advantage that each participant was able to take away with them the source documents generated at the meeting. This meant there was no delay before group discussion could occur in the workplace. It also ensured that the participants had the actual document they had seen generated at the workshop,

rather than a typed version which inevitably looks different (and may appear to them to have been tampered with).

All workshops were held in a conference room on the Executive floor of the CLD building. The room is light and airy, with spectacular river views, and I believe the ambience of the room is positive. Tables were arranged in a U shape with the whiteboard and facilitator at the open end of the U.

My style as facilitator inevitably impacts on workshop outcomes and testing of research themes, and this was emphasised in the interviews which I conducted with other facilitators as part of this research. (See Appendix 4.)

I would describe my facilitation style as warm and encouraging. I try to achieve a balance between achieving shared understanding and preserving alternative viewpoints. I aim for workshops to be harmonious, where alternative ideas can be challenged without any hostility or threat. Harmony was maintained, for the most part, in the Case Study 1, but this was not to be case for Case Study 2. However, I realise that too much harmony can quell new ideas, as in Morgan's example of staff meetings in an organisation which was promoting harmony above all else:

"We sit in the same seats, like cows always go to the same stall. It's a real waste of time. It's a situation where you can say just about anything and no one will refute it. People are very hesitant to speak up, afraid to say too much. They say what everyone else wants to hear." (Morgan, 1986 p 122)

In addition, the positive aspects of allowing conflict to emerge in workshops were highlighted in my consultant interviews.

In workshops I try to focus on opportunities, believing that all problems can be turned around to find an opportunity to improve. From experience in conducting many workshops I have formed the view that participants become despondent and cannot think laterally when a negative, problem focus is taken - as if a black cloud hangs over the room. Hence I do not use Checkland's term "problem situation" to describe the first phase of the methodology, preferring Galliers' (1985) Organisational Analysis and Synthesis.

I try at all times to achieve strong control of the process of the workshop, but believe the participants own the content. However, I will ask questions to steer the content, based on the background information I have gathered in pre-workshop interviews. I also try to extend the thinking in workshops by critically questioning assumptions and occasionally by bringing in examples from other organisations.

I believe that a facilitator has to enjoy facilitating and care about the project - and that this shows.

I am constantly amazed at the power which participants hand over to the facilitator. I try not to abuse this power and try to guide, but not manipulate the group.

Time pressures are always evident in workshops, and the facilitator must judge when to cut short debate and move on to the next agenda item. This time pressure characterises the participative, workshop approach, in comparison to the earlier use of SSM where a small team had time to think and reflect "in the back-room". With a wide group of participants, who must continue with their daily responsibilities while carrying out the SSM process, there are always

limitations on time available for workshops, etc. This difficulty was also highlighted in my interview with Cole (Appendix 4) when she stated, "It is important to realise that people going through change have to run their business at the same time. The change initiatives are extra curricula activities."

Reflecting on the Case Study 1 workshops I believe the participants were fairly characteristic of any group in terms of their range of personalities. Represented in the group there were conservatives, strategic thinkers, pragmatists, cynics, optimists, those who picked up new ideas quickly, those who struggled with new ideas, people who acquiesced quickly and those who were argumentative, brash people and shy. The challenge for me, as facilitator, was to try to forget these labels I had mentally given participants, and respond fairly and with the same enthusiasm to all of them. And as highlighted by Jackson (1982), inevitably there are imbalances in the power and resources of individual participants.

Throughout the review I had regular meetings with Glen Coffey and Neil Hunter (and sometimes we were joined by Les Cooper, IT Manager). The purpose of these meetings was to review status and plan next steps in the project. The meetings were always enjoyable and challenging, and there was a frank and open communication about how we felt about project highs and lows. The three Managers had a close and effective working relationship (and ran together at lunchtimes). It assisted my role in the project to be included in this relationship (but, by choice, I did not join in the running!). However, I did try to ensure that this relationship did not create an apparent subculture in the Working Party which might affect the rule of no rank. I may not have been entirely successful given the allegation which emerged in Workshop 3 that the information on the whiteboard had been manipulated during the lunch break. In addition, there were isolated comments on the post project questionnaires suggesting that management had the answers all the time and the participative process was a sham.

## INTRODUCTORY MEETING

On 8th September 1992, three days before the first workshop a preliminary meeting of the Working Party was held. The meeting lasted only one hour, and I did most of the talking.

The agenda is presented below:

### **Agenda**

1. Roles and responsibilities of each member of the Working Party.
2. Questions about the Review process.
3. Preparation for the 1st Workshop on Friday 11th September, ie:

- ISSUES: Now and future

eg Changes occurring in:

Society, Courts, Judiciary,  
Legal Profession, Government

Crown Law Department



Professional groups (I.T., H.R.,  
Accounting, Audit, Corporate Planning, Management  
Services, etc.)

Workplace

Technology

- PRELIMINARY VISION:

Your “ideal” view of Corporate Services:

Describe in one word:

What would it be like working here?

What would Clients think about Corporate  
Services:

What would be different?

- STRENGTHS:

What are we good at?

- WEAKNESSES:

What could be improved?  
What could go wrong?

- OPPORTUNITIES:

*Where are greatest chances “to do great things?”*

- THREATS:

What would be the outcome if things went wrong - if we didn’t  
change?

*[Remember, input will change once all ideas are  
considered.]*

The objectives of this meeting were to:

- Ensure all participants understood the importance of their role on the Working Party, i.e.

To facilitate group discussion outside the workshops as a means of bringing input to  
each workshop.

To be responsible for the decision-making which will reshape Corporate Services.

- Discuss the agenda for the first workshop so that participants would be able to gather input from their colleagues.
- Provide an opportunity for questions.

I emphasised that in representing their peers they themselves were facilitators. As such they should encourage input and a wide range of viewpoints, and be prepared to bring these viewpoints to the workshops even though they were not their own views. At the workshops they would provide both their own views and those of their peers. As facilitators, they should also emphasise that all input “goes into the melting pot”, is synthesised and debated and will emerge in a different form. There was also an important facilitator role for them in taking the results of each workshop back to their peers, answering any questions and bringing feedback to the next workshop session.

Overall, there were few questions. Either the participants were “comfortable” with the process, or were too shy to ask. However, as the series of workshops progressed I felt that the bringing forward of ideas from their peers was working well, as there were often comments such as, “This is not really my view, but I have been asked to say this”.

## WORKSHOP 1

Workshop 1 was held between 08.30 and 12.30 on 11 September 1993.

I provided an agenda with specific timeframes as a way of focusing the participants on the likely amount of time I considered we would need to spend on each agenda item. However, I explained at the beginning of the workshop that we could agree to vary the times during the workshop, but this would be a conscious group decision rather than letting time drift.

### **Agenda**

8.30 - 8.35	Introduction Workshop RULES: No rank Alternative viewpoints All ideas are good ideas Participation
8.35 - 9.30	Issues impacting on Corporate Services - Now and Future
9.30 - 9.50	Highest priority issues
9.50 - 10.00	Coffee Break
10.00 - 10.45	Vision for Corporate Services (Preliminary)
10.45 - 12.15	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats - for Corporate Services

## 12.15 - 12.30 Information to be gathered for Workshop 2

The workshop progressed as follows:

I began the workshop by spending 5 minutes reiterating the workshop “rules”, i.e.

- No rank  
(Participants would interact as if all were of equal rank in the organisation.)
- Alternative viewpoints  
(It is positive to put forward opposing viewpoints. This is not to be considered as conflict in the group, but a valuable exchange of alternatives.)
- All ideas are good ideas  
(We want lateral, creative thinking. Every idea, no matter how offbeat will be fed into the melting pot. Without this creativity we are in danger of missing the really exciting opportunities.)
- Participation  
(Everyone is here to participate fully. However, this also means not “holding the floor” and thus excluding others from participating. As facilitator, I will try to ensure all have a chance to participate.)

Throughout the workshops I reinforced these “rules”. I believe they were accepted by the participants and they did try to abide by them. All Managers tried hard not to give an impression of rank, although it was obvious that Glen Coffey was a catalyst to lateral thinking by the way he constantly challenged traditional viewpoints.

In using the rules of no rank and full and equal participation I do, however, recognise that this cannot be achieved fully; that inevitably there will be inequalities based on intellectual ability, power and status (Jackson, 1982, 1985); however, by introducing the “rules”, and by my style of facilitation, I am attempting to create an environment where these constraints are minimised as much as possible.

### Issues: Structured Brainstorm:

This agenda item gave the participants their first chance to participate, using the structured brainstorming technique (similar to nominal group technique) which I have developed to aid participation and which works as follows:

- Participants are given approximately 5 minutes to write down in note form on their own paper the answer to a question. (In this case the issues impacting on Corporate Services, now and future.) There is no discussion.
- When I notice that all participants have finished writing I ask each participant in turn to give me one idea which I write on the electronic whiteboard. I request that the idea is expressed succinctly, that there is no explanation given, and no questions asked. The aim is to give all participants the confidence to input ideas (since they are asked directly and

can simply read an answer from their own notes); and to set the communication style for the workshop, ie ideas fed in quickly, accepted on face value, and then debated.

- Participants are encouraged to listen actively and add the opposite idea to one expressed if they disagree, or to add on to another participant's input.
- Once all ideas have been collected, I ask whether there are any questions. These are debated.

I then ask if there are any ideas with which anyone disagrees, emphasising again that alternative viewpoints are positive. Any differences are discussed and if not resolved I note against the idea that there was disagreement. No ideas are removed.

Using this process the issues impacting on Corporate Services, now and future, were identified and debated.

The participants had obviously done their pre-meeting preparation, and a massive list of 59 issues was generated (filling two screens of the electronic whiteboard). The input showed a good balance between inward and outward focus, and between "big picture issues" and local items, as shown below:

- Outward looking, big picture issues, for example:
  - Increased demand on the courts, CLD and Corporate Services resulting from population increase, unemployment, recession, breakdown of the family unit, increased crime.
  - Increased level and complexity of litigation coupled with the need for more efficiency and speed.
- Inward looking, local items, for example:
  - Separated, individual groups within Corporate Services - we don't appreciate what each other does, what services are provided.
  - Inflexible career paths.
  - Lack of user training for new computer systems.

These issues were later grouped by Neil Hunter under the following headings (and provided to working party members):

Society  
Courts  
Judiciary  
Legal Profession  
Government  
Technology  
Resource Acquisition & Management  
Departmental Changes  
Human Resource Management  
Work Place Matters  
Planning  
Role Clarification/Personal

We then attempted in the workshop to pick out which were the highest priority issues, ie those issues where the impact must be addressed during the review process. (Although the full list of issues was constantly referred to during subsequent workshops as a check list to make sure we were not losing the “big picture”).)

Deciding highest priority issues was done by asking each participant to say which single issue they believed was more important than any other in terms of our Review. No ranking based on scores was involved. While I recognise that this process could be regarded as reductionist, the aim was to try to determine whether there was agreement on which items would have the most significant impact on the review, and hence would need to be addressed if the review was to be successful.

The following were identified as priority issues:

- Society:
  - Population increase, leading to increased demand.
  - Unemployment, increased crime, recession = more work for Corporate Services.
  - Change in client base - middle class involved in Courts, leading to an increase in the level of service and professionalism expected from us.
- Rate of Change:
  - Rate of change (Government and society). We must be more responsive, timely, consistent, flexible.
  - Stress on people resulting from rapid change in all areas, leading to morale problems and questions of how to manage change.
  - Resistance to change in the legal profession (our clients) leading to increased conflict with Corporate Services/the world.
  - Judicial independence. Trend (throughout Australia) for establishment of a separate Courts Department.
- Government:
  - Demand to be more effective from government and clients - need to demonstrate accountability; measure performance.
  - Less resources, less public servants, less money (government policy).
  - Risk of Corporate Services losing resources. Strain on existing resources.
- Clients:
  - Us and them attitude: Corporate Services and rest of CLD. Reduces our effectiveness.
  - Corporate Services image in the rest of CLD needs to improve.
- Internal Communication:
  - Inadequate communication/information flow - impacts on staff morale and performance.

*[My groupings]*

From these priorities, I gained an impression of a group developing a shared understanding of why change was occurring, but uneasy about their ability to manage the change process. They were also concerned to be perceived positively by others. I was pleased that there was no

proffering of solutions at this early stage, as occurs in some projects, since SSM emphasises that this stage of analysis is about finding out, not finding answers.

I had some concerns that staff problems had not really been reflected in the priorities, other than the communication issue above. In one branch in particular there appeared to be morale problems, (although there was a scattering of dissatisfaction in other areas), and seven human resource items were in the full list of issues, i.e.

1. Need for education and training; need to plan our own education and training.
2. Waste: People not used to true potential - not productive.
3. Management style - staff performance.
4. Inflexible career path/work place not enjoyable - risk of losing key people; skills, expertise - impact on projects.
5. Workplace reform/enterprise bargaining - greater participation of staff in own destiny.
6. Stress on people resulting from rapid change in all areas - Morale; How to manage change.
7. Our people in general - staff satisfaction.

However, these staffing problems were not underestimated as the review progressed, and they impacted significantly on the structure of the conceptual models and resultant action plans.

Two other items in the issues list which were not rated as a priority turned out to have huge impact on future direction, ie:

1. Trend towards mega departments.
2. Possibility of Don Doig (the CEO) retiring in 2 to 3 years - possible new directions.

Just as the review concluded there was a change of government (the Liberal Party won the State election), Crown Law Department was combined into a mega department, and Don Doig retired. Possible new directions had certainly eventuated. Perhaps we could have done more to plan for this potential outcome in our study by incorporating a scenario based approach as part of Organisational Analysis and Synthesis. (Galliers, 1991a) *However, the sponsor, as part of the review of the draft thesis, does not believe that scenario analysis would have assisted given the politics involved.*

We returned to the list of issues (and the SWOT analysis) several times during later workshops to cross check that we were not forgetting any issues in our later analysis.

### Elements of a Preliminary Vision

Given the broad understanding which was developing of the issues impacting on Corporate Services, the next step in the workshop was to begin some very preliminary and tentative work towards developing a shared vision for Corporate Services.

The approach I used aimed to balance the more functional emphasis in the issues, with a focus on values relating to personal and interpersonal characteristics.

I asked the participants, “In your ideal Corporate Services, what would be different”. Again using a structured brainstorming approach, twenty four items were generated. I have grouped them as follows:

- Personal/Emotional:
  - Happier.
  - More harmonious.
  - Better staff attitudes/morale.
  - More commitment because we know where we’re going.
  - Salaries more in line with private industry.
  - Increased acceptance of personal responsibility.
  - Staff attitudes (Lucky to have a job, therefore increased effort, and put out more work).
  - Gender balance (Men in Records Section for heavy lifting).
  - Increased focus on people.
  - More caring.

(Two of these views were questioned, and noted as “not agreed by all participants”. Firstly, the vision that staff in the future would realise how lucky there were to have a job and would therefore work harder, was expressed by a Manager who regularly took this type of view. From the pre interviews I understood that his staff had low morale and were unhappy with their Manager. The group preferred to express that “we appreciate our jobs and our organisation”. Secondly, the need for gender balance so that there would be more men in the Records Section able to do heavy lifting was also an isolated view, although the females amongst the participants highlighted that there were no women in senior management positions in Corporate Services.)

- How viewed by others:
  - Seen as essential.
  - More appreciated by others; higher opinion of us.
  - Unity. No us and them.
- How we work.
  - Coordinated approach.
  - Less bureaucratic.
  - More input from staff to policy.
  - Better communication and understanding of what everyone does in Corporate Services.
  - More accountability for performance.
  - More clearly defined goals and performance measures.
  - More effective use of resources (staff and money).
  - Culture would be different.
- Outputs:
  - Better service
  - Better flexibility/more responsive

Further work on the preliminary vision was achieved by asking the question (which if possible had to be answered by one word) “What will it be like working in Corporate Services - ideally”. Twenty two words were generated. The participants were then asked to identify

which ideas were furthest from the current situation (ie needed a strategy to achieve). Six were identified. These were: Rewarding, harmonious, effective, we are part of a team, efficient, consistent.

Similarly, participants were asked “Our clients will say we are..... - ideally”. Thirty one words were generated. The ones acknowledge to be furthest from the current client perception of Corporate Services were - Supportive, professional, cooperative, responsible, necessary, effective, invaluable, flexible, proactive.

The purpose of this preliminary work on the vision was to build on the understanding of key issues by starting to identify the ethos that the participants believed was most important for the Corporate Services of the future. They were also starting to identify gaps between where they wanted to be, and where they were now.

My own thoughts were that the group was being a little hard on themselves at this stage as the pre-workshop interviews had indicated many participants thought there was strong team spirit and a rewarding working environment, and that they did regularly receive praise from clients.

#### Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT Analysis)

The last activity for the first workshop was to begin to position Corporate Services, comparing the current situation with the shared understanding of the future which was beginning to be identified.

Again a wealth of rich information was fed into the process, and participants were beginning to relax and increasingly were building on each other's ideas, rather than relying solely on their own notes.

I was also beginning to realise the potential for information overload with seventeen participants all bringing input from a group of colleagues - and building on each other's ideas in the workshop!

The SWOT analysis is summarised as follows:

##### Strengths:

Of the twenty-six strengths, the majority related to the skills and personal attributes within Corporate Services. Only four took a client perspective (ie Credibility with external agencies and other programme areas; delivery of IT systems; ability to determine priorities for client service; relationships and rapport with people in other programme areas.)

##### Weaknesses:

Of the twenty nine weaknesses, again almost all were internally focussed, relating to culture, role, style, failings as a team, structure, communication, knowledge. Three weaknesses were client focussed (Client education - so they understand/appreciate what we do; Sometimes lack willingness to get out and meet clients one-to-one; Not fully understand our clients' operations and needs).



The workshop concluded with a handout detailing the information to be gathered for Workshop 2. (By this stage it appeared that participants and facilitator were exhausted.)

### Client Input

In developing the Project Plan Glen Coffey had been keen to involve Corporate Services' clients in the project in order to understand their needs and gain their support for the outcomes of the review. It was decided to achieve the initial input by scheduling meetings with external clients (ie external to CLD) and holding a workshop with internal clients. These were to be carried out before Working Party workshop 2 so that the results could be fed into that workshop.

Interviews were considered most appropriate for external clients as it was expected that their needs and relationships with Corporate Services were very different. It was expected that a workshop of internal clients would identify common viewpoints and enable synergy to be developed amongst these clients when debating future requirements from Corporate Services.

### Interviews with External Clients

These interviews were conducted by Neil Hunter and myself at the client's offices. There were four interviews involving the Public Service Commission, Treasury, Auditor General, Department of Premier and Cabinet. Each of these organisations is a central agency, with State government-wide responsibility. All were regarded as clients as they relied on information and services from CLD Corporate Services.

Each interviews lasted approximately one hour and was based on the following agenda:

- Reason for the Corporate Services Review - objectives and approach.
- Client view of the relationship with Corporate Services. Strengths and weaknesses.
- Changes in client agencies which will impact on the information/services required from Corporate Services.

*The interviews indicated that the relationships between these external clients and the various branches of Corporate Services ranged from good to excellent. The Public Service Commission (which had a State government-wide responsibility for HR management) considered that the Corporate Services HR branch was so innovative and forward thinking that the Public Service Commission would like to learn more from their experiences.*

Strengths expressed related to timely and credible provision of information, balanced views, and an approachable, responsive style.

Weaknesses were in the general acceptance of the Central Agency role by Corporate Services (a common problem in State government, where Central Agencies may be perceived to meddle in Departmental affairs), and in some instances it was felt that communication could be improved.

The changes which would impact on Corporate Services were identified as the expectation that all Corporate Services groups in line agencies such as CLD would take an increasing strategic focus (rather than concentrating on operational processing tasks). Central agencies would

become less directly involved with line agency functions, but would develop standards against which line agencies would be expected to self-review.

I felt that the meetings were warm and that the attitudes towards CLD were very positive. The expectation of a more strategic role for Corporate Services was welcomed by Neil and myself and fitted with the view which was emerging that Corporate Services might need to move away from operational processing tasks if it was to make a real impact on CLD's success.

#### Workshop with Internal Clients

The eight participants for this workshop were senior administrative staff from CLD programme areas, namely, Courts, Crown Solicitor, Director of Public Prosecutions, Registrar General, Public Trust, Children's Court, Magistrates Courts, Parliamentary Council.

At the commencement of the project Glen Coffey had written to each of these programme areas asking for these representatives to be nominated so that client needs could be understood.

Most of the representatives were familiar with the objectives of such reviews as they had been participants in recent reviews of their own areas.

The workshop was also attended by Glen Coffey and Neil Hunter and had the following agenda:

#### **Agenda**

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 9.30 - 9.40   | Introduction to the Review   |
| 9.40 - 10.20  | Changes in Client Areas  |
|               | - Changes in role  |
|               | - Changes in activities  |
|               | - Changes in demand, etc.  |
|               | Future changes   |
| 10.20 - 11.20 | What services and support should Corporate Services provide?               |
|               | What are the major differences to the current provision?                   |
| 11.20 - 12.20 | Strengths and Weakness of Corporate Services (from the Client perspective) |
|               | Priorities in relation to resolving weaknesses                             |
|               | Potential solutions to resolve weaknesses                                  |
| 12.20 - 12.30 | Where to from here   |

The workshop was lively and there was good rapport and communication between all attendees, reinforcing in my mind the team spirit amongst administrative staff across CLD.

The participants obviously knew each other well and engaged in banter. There was a great deal of consistency in the viewpoints expressed.

The conclusion from the internal client perspective were:

The clients believe they are facing increasing challenges to do more with less, while at the same time the demands on the justice system are growing in volume and complexity. Therefore there is a role for Corporate Services to ease some of these pressures by assisting with the planning, policy implementation, advice and services associated with the Department's resources (HR, Finance, Information, Technology, Buildings). However, confusion was expressed about the lack of delineation between the roles of CLD executive and Corporate Services (which were often seen as the same). The clients made an initial attempt to resolve this issue and we took it onboard to address further as part of the review process.

Clients regarded that Corporate Services had strengths in terms of its:

- Approach/Philosophy  
which was seen to be based on teams and partnerships, with a central focus, and the appropriate expertise to support the programme areas;
- People  
who were considered to be committed, service oriented and approachable;
- Services  
with processing tasks considered to be well done in most areas.

In discussing Corporate Services' weaknesses it was obvious that the clients believed that some branches were operating more effectively than others, with very positive views being expressed about HR and IT.

With these differences in mind, weaknesses were expressed as:

- Approach/Philosophy  
There is inconsistency in some areas. In general there is the need for a greater knowledge by Corporate Services staff about client areas. There is also opportunity for the client team approach used by HR to be introduced to other branches. All Corporate Services staff need to interact more closely with clients - attending client meetings, etc.
- Resources  
There were conflicting perceptions as to whether Corporate Services is under resourced and cannot meet client needs, or whether Corporate Services is overstaffed since clients do not understand what Corporate Services does or achieves.

The Chief Executive Officer (Under Secretary for Law), Don Doig attended later internal client workshops, but was unable to attend the above session. A separate interview was carried out with Don.

Overall Don was most friendly, supportive and encouraging of the review (which I believed was characteristic of Don's management style). As a client of Corporate Services Don Doig expressed concerns for the way information reaches him and saw the need for more formal

communication processes. He emphasised that he needs to be kept informed on “pressure points”, despite the autonomy of the programme managers.

At an operational level Don believed that Corporate Services worked well, with the exception of some aspects of the Records area.

From a futures perspective Don discussed the impact of the next State election (in six months time) should there be a change of government. An option was that CLD would combine with Corrective Services and Juvenile Justice (and this did transpire). Alternatively an independent Courts Commission could be established. Each could have profound effects on CLD.

In hindsight I have wondered if we could have done more to plan for these eventualities, which in the end overtook the implementation of our review. However, Glen Coffey, in reviewing the draft thesis, emphasised that the motivations were political and there was nothing more we could do.

## WORKING PARTY WORKSHOP 2

(Friday 18 September: 8.30 am to 4.30 pm)

### **Agenda**

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 8.30 - 9.15   | Feedback from Workshop 1  |
| 9.15 - 10.30  | CLIENT FOCUS<br>Who are our clients?<br>How are their needs changing?<br>Neil Hunter to present results of Client interviews and workshop   |
| 10.30 - 10.45 | Morning Tea   |
| 10.45 - 12.15 | CORPORATE SERVICES ROLE<br>(Think futures!)<br>Why does Corporate Services exist?<br>What is our major task?<br>What problem are we trying to address?<br>What constraints/limitations are there on our role? |
| 12.15 - 1.15  | Lunch   |
| 1.15 - 2.45   | KEY ACTIVITIES<br>What Key Activities should Corporate Services carry out to achieve its role?<br>How do the Activities link together? (Model)  |
| 2.45 - 3.00   | Afternoon Tea   |
| 2.45 - 4.00   | Keywords to describe each activity  |
| 4.00 - 4.30   | Information to be gathered for next workshop  |

## Workshop Content:

### Feedback from Workshop 1

The participants were obviously still consulting with their peers and as a result feedback on Workshop 1 was brought to Workshop 2. This feedback involved new issues being added (Making sure Corporate Services people have a broad understanding of all Corporate Services activities; the problem of giving equal service to all clients when clients want preferential treatment; and the lack of positive feedback from clients.)

Other items of feedback indicated some unease about the outcomes of the review, since questions had been asked about how people will be looked after if their roles disappear. Glen Coffey responded to this by guaranteeing that everyone would have a productive, challenging job after the review, with no redeployment. (Unfortunately events were to overtake this promise when Glen moved on to another agency after the Department amalgamated with Corrective Services, but the promise was made in good faith at the time.)

### Clients

There was a good response to identification of “Who are our clients?” and a shared understanding was quickly developed. There was also lively debate and good shared understanding about “How are our clients’ needs changing?”

When Neil Hunter presented the results of the Internal Client Workshops there were some concerns that Working Party members had not been present. However, if we had included them it would have been a very large workshop and clients may not have been so open in their comments. On the other hand it would have enriched the learning curve of the Working Party members.

I realised when I reflected on the Working Party’s view of internal clients that the accepted systems model of CLD was not of an adaptive whole. All members of the Working Party repeatedly emphasised the administrative complexities which resulted from the autonomy of the judiciary and the legal programmes. Rather, the systems model was closer to Atkinson and Checkland’s description of a cooperative, where the maximum amount of cooperation is sought, but it is recognised that full participation can never be achieved because of the conflict of some of the interests of members. (1988) For CLD the judiciary and prosecutions, in particular, must have significantly different Weltanschauungen.

### Why Will Corporate Services Exist?

In answer to this question we generated 15 different and, I thought, uninspiring responses. I felt we had a long way to go to develop a strategic vision. All the answers revolved around providing an efficient and cost effective central service. I found myself worrying about what is the bottom line contribution of Corporate Services; if I was establishing CLD why would I pay the price of having a Corporate Services, etc? I tried to pose these questions but the group clearly was not ready (although they did debate and resolve these questions at later workshops).

I remembered the iterative nature of SSM and decided to move on and return to this core issue (essentially the *Weltanschauung*) later.

Nevertheless, it was with some concern that I moved the workshop on to the question “What is our Major Task?” A rational, reductionist philosophy would have required that the question “Why will Corporate Services Exist?” was answered first. However, SSM is not meant to be a rational/reductionist approach. There was good debate about the major task and synthesis of input to arrive at a preliminary view that the major task should encompass:

- Planning and managing change,
- Optimising resources,
- Coordinating the services required,
- Providing direction to the Department.

[The underlines were agreed at the workshop.]

Significantly, the view was starting to emerge that Corporate Services’ task was resource management, and any administrative tasks outside this scope should possibly be moved elsewhere. However, the style at this stage was from the stance “Market what we can do then wait for clients to express a need”. Which was more reactive than the final outcome of the review.

In SSM terms, this question was beginning to address the process component of the “T” (Transformation Process) of CATWOE.

#### What Problem are we Trying to Address?

The wording of this question was suggested by Glen Coffey. From an SSM perspective it linked to the previous question of major task (or process) and was searching for the input and output components of the “T” (Transformation Process) of CATWOE. That is, what problem is the input to the major task, and what will have changed if we solve the problem. The debate showed that we had not reached a fundamental understanding of *Weltanschauungen*, and the focus tended to be “Clients have problems which they cannot solve so we should solve them on their behalf; or that it is more efficient to do things centrally.”

Again I decided to move the debate forward and iterate back to this question.

#### Constraints/Limitations on Corporate Services Role

This question was meant to address the “E” (Environmental Constraints) of SSM’s CATWOE. The participants had misunderstood the question and had gathered information on internal as well as external constraints. This turned out to be an advantage (and demonstrates how application of methodology evolves with practical application). The internal constraints all related to the culture, bureaucracy, structure, skills, etc. and through debate we were able to agree that, in fact, we could begin to change all these things via this review. We had jumped, temporarily, to the gap analysis stage of SSM (again reinforcing the methodology’s iterative nature).

External constraints were identified as government policy and legislation, government funding, trade union influence, and the size and isolation of Western Australia.

### Key Activities

A long list of thirty activity was debated and grouped under the headings Human Resources, Finances, Technology, Information, Assets - furthering the view that Corporate Services' role was resource related. This left a group of activities which we put on one side and called Miscellaneous, since they did not seem to fit the resource view.

A second list was generated to accommodate the other types of activities, which were not corporate or core tasks, but would need to be carried out by all Corporate Services areas. These were grouped into categories which loosely related to:

- Training and developing our staff
- Communication and fostering of relationships - internal and internal
- Planning, managing change, and providing information and advice.

We had overrun our timetable for the workshop and did not have time to begin to model key activities. In any case, the full day session had been exhausting for all participants (including the facilitator) and I believe that to move the participants on to modelling would have been too steep a learning curve at the end of the session.

### WORKING PARTY WORKSHOP 3

(Thursday 24 September 1992, 8.30 to 4.30)

#### **Agenda**

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| 8.30 - 9.30   | Feedback from Workshop 2  |
| 9.30 - 10.30  | Review issues from Workshop 1<br>Clarify the Vision and Role for<br>Corporate Services  |
| 10.30 - 12.30 | For Each Key Activity:<br>Think futures re:<br>Why should the Activity exist?<br>Who are the clients?<br>What problems are we trying to address?<br>What constraints are there on the role?<br>What are the objectives:<br>How will we know if we are successful? |
| 12.30 - 1.30  | Lunch   |
| 1.30 - 4.00   | Continue with Key Activity analysis   |
| 4.00 - 4.30   | Participants for next workshops<br>Information to be gathered for next workshops  |

It is important to clarify here that the use of the word “objectives” represented a search for a business term which the participants would understand. However, the debate was within SSM philosophy that there are no obvious objectives, rather there are multiple viewpoints. In essence the objectives debate was exploring elements both of Weltanschauungen and conceptual activities.

### Workshop Content

Feedback continued to come in from the wider group in Corporate Services, most of which were minor items. However, two major issues did emerge.

Firstly, there was the question whether Technology and Information should be considered as separate resource areas/key activity areas. This engendered quite heated debate, for and against, and it was obvious that the participants were thinking of organisational structure implications and jobs, although I had emphasised that in identifying key activities we were not deciding structure. The issue was whether Records, Library and Information Technology belonged together.

The second issue related to policy, and whether it should be the responsibility of the Executive, Corporate Services or Programme Managers. This issue of delineation of accountability between Corporate Services and Programme Managers continued to be hotly debated throughout the workshops. On the one hand there was the argument that Programme Managers must be accountable - but then what was the performance measure for Corporate Services? On the other hand, if Corporate Services was responsible for resource policies, how could Programme Managers be responsible for programme outcomes?

### Corporate Services Role

The rather tortuous debate continued on the role for Corporate Services (and hence the Weltanschauungen). Glen and Neil had tried to assist by meeting separately and generating a hand written list of sixteen potential role statements. These were circulated and debated at the workshop and the list reduced, but still no real shared understanding. The underlying issue was whether Corporate Services’ role was a reactive one of assisting programmes, or whether there was a more proactive, strategic role. Whenever the word “ensure” arose in the context of role, there were those who argued strongly that Corporate Services could not ensure anything as the Programme Managers had the power to do as they wished.

The participants decided they would like to vote on the two statements each person preferred to gain an indication of emerging preferences. Voting was widely scattered. However, the favourite with eight votes was:

*To support and develop an environment for excellence in the Crown Law Department through specialist advisory services in HRM, Finance, Technology, Information and Administration.*

In SSM terms we were actually debating Root Definitions. Using the criteria for a Root Definition of “Do X by Y in order to achieve Z” (Checkland and Scholes, 1990 p 36), this statement had the X and Y but no Z, i.e. needed a closing clause which expressed “in order to.....”.



Second preference, with four votes was:

*To facilitate the provision of support services to enable our clients to achieve their objectives in the most efficient and effective means.*

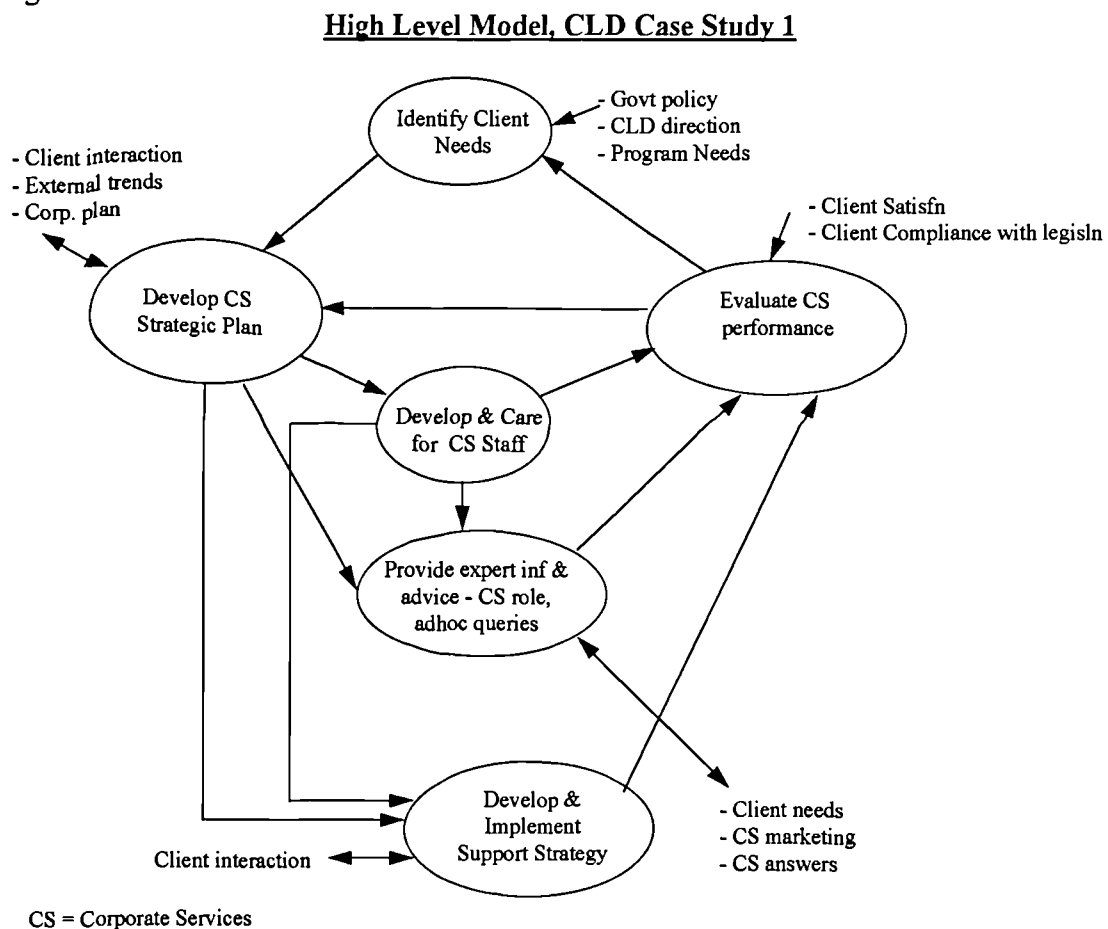
This statement had the X and Z, but no Y, i.e. it did not explain how this would be done.

Neither statement had full support, or seemed to push the thinking far enough so that there was a strong understanding of what Corporate Services was trying to achieve and how their output would be evaluated. I again made the decision to move on, and return to role later. In fact, although shared understanding on role evolved throughout all workshops, it was one of the last items to be finalised in the review.

#### Activity Model

I felt that the extent to which shared understanding was developing was illustrated by the relative ease with which the group were guided into agreeing a high level conceptual activity model for the Corporate Services of the future, and perhaps even more significantly, the extent to which the model differed from the current activities of Corporate Services. The model evolved as our understanding grew, but did not change dramatically from this first version:

Figure 7:



My approach to developing the model was to draw the template model (as discussed in Appendix 2) and then ask the group to volunteer ideas of how the model could be made specific

to Corporate Services. At this stage participation from the group was uneven, with some participants obviously enjoying the intellectual challenge of the modelling activity, and others “sitting it out”, perhaps trying to understand the process. I made some suggestions of alternatives, but tried hard to let the model emerge from the participants.

The following overview of the thinking behind each activity is included to give an indication of how the changed Weltanschauung of Corporate Services was developing. I felt that the modelling had a very significant impact on Weltanschauung, but this view was not so strongly reflected in the Working Party’s responses to my questionnaire at the end of the project.

#### **Activity 1: Identify Client Needs**

This was a change in thinking. At the time of the review there was no formal process carried out by any Corporate Services branch to identify client needs; nor was there much evidence of this happening informally except as part of information needs analysis in IT projects. Other than in IT, Corporate Services approach had mainly been to respond to individual client requests.

It was also significant that the external impacts to this activity were identified as Government Policy, CLD Direction (from the Executive), and Programme Needs. While Corporate Services had an active role in responding to Government Policy (emanating mostly from central agencies), there was no real identification or understanding of CLD Direction or Programme Needs. In fact, as mentioned earlier, the role of the Executive was mixed into the activities of Corporate Services.

#### **Activity 2: Develop Corporate Services Strategic Plan**

Another new activity. Corporate Services had never had a Strategic Plan - neither had CLD or any of its Programme areas. In fact, one of the questions raised in early workshops was whether the various Corporate Services branches had anything in common. This activity was suggesting that they had so much in common that they should develop a Strategic Plan covering all resource areas.

The external inputs were shown as External Trends (which were only really monitored by the IT Branch), Client Interaction (so the strategic planning was seen to be in some way a cooperative activity with clients), and CLD Corporate Plan (which did not exist, although one had been attempted and abandoned in the past, due to the problems of the autonomy of the Programme Managers).

I interpreted this as an emerging vision for a Corporate Services which would develop a Strategic Plan covering all of its resource management activities, and that this strategic plan would be based on identification of client needs (Activity 1), client involvement in the planning process, and requirements of the CLD Corporate Plan. I believe Glen Coffey, Neil Hunter and Les Cooper (the IT Manager) also had this understanding, and perhaps some of the other participants did also, but I am sure the full impact of the activity was appreciated by many of the workshop participants. However, this was not surprising as many of them had worked exclusively for CLD and/or had no experience of strategic planning, although HR did have an Operational Plan, and IT had IT Plans (although these had largely been developed by external consultants).

### **Activity 3: Develop and Care for Corporate Services Staff**

This activity reflected the issues relating to staff problems in some areas of Corporate Services. There was some debate about how to word this activity so that it did not sound too paternalistic. The aim was for a team based approach with individual responsibility for personal development as well as the team caring for each other. However, with no better alternative, the wording stayed as shown.

There was also an individual manager who strongly opposed this activity, taking a much more autocratic, dictatorial attitude to staff's obligation to work hard and be grateful to have a job. The ensuing debate was useful in developing a shared view amongst the rest of the participants as they argued for the type of caring organisation they really wanted and valued.

I was pleased to see this activity included, and worded in a more value laden way than the more bland "manage staff" which appears in some SSM studies. From my later discussions with other SSM consultants (Appendix 4) I realised that this activity also helped to balance the more rational/functional perspective of the other activities in the model.

### **Activity 4: Provide Expert Information and Advice**

- Corporate Services Role
- Adhoc Queries

This activity showed that part of the Y of the Root Definition (Do X by Y in order to achieve Z) was beginning to emerge.

The reference to providing advice about Corporate Services Role was in response to feedback from internal clients that they did not understand what Corporate Services did. There was a recognition by Corporate Services of the need to market their services. There was also some discussion that this would be even more important if the role changed.

The Adhoc Queries referred to a role where expertise in resource management would be vested in Corporate Services on behalf of CLD, and they would then respond to requests for information and advice from their clients.

### **Activity 5: Develop and Implement Support Strategy for HR, Finance, Information, Technology**

Support Strategy as a term was discussed and it was agreed that it referred to Corporate Services providing direction, policy, procedures and systems, and operational services and processes (ie further development of the concept of the Y of the Root Definition).

It was agreed that the way Support Strategy applied to the various resource areas would be developed in further workshops.

I noted with interest that the resource areas were being described as HR, Finance, Information and Technology (with Information and Technology still separate), and that a note was made on the side of the model that Administration (ie the Miscellaneous tasks acquired by Corporate Services) was not considered part of the model. It was decided that a separate workshop would be held to further explore what to do with Administration.

#### **Activity 6: Evaluate Corporate Services Performance**

This, too was a new Activity. The overall performance of Corporate Services had never been evaluated, formally or informally. External inputs were shown as Client Satisfaction, and Client Compliance to Legislation, etc. This was a breakthrough. Corporate Services had achieved a quite strong client service culture, and so the idea of client satisfaction being the measure of performance was understandable. However, to add to this Client Compliance indicated that at least some members of the Working Party were beginning to see a Corporate Services accountability for what the Programme Managers did in relation to *resource management policy*. Glen Coffey was an exponent of this wider degree of accountability, and as senior executive in the group, well liked and trusted by many of the participants, he was probably having some influence on thinking at this stage.

Having developed the model there was a suggestion from Glen that the model could be applied as a template to each of the resource areas, as a basis for further analysis. I had not previously used the concept of a generic model, but could see potential in the idea and agreed we should try this. I wondered whether I was straying too far from SSM, and only later learnt during my interviews with Checkland and other SSM consultants (Appendix 4) of the use of generic SSM models in their work, for example National Health Service projects undertaken by Peter Checkland, Chris Atkinson, and others.

We therefore changed the agenda for the rest of the workshop to explore the questions of role (“why should the activity exist”) and performance evaluation (“how will we know if we are successful”) for each resource area. We emphasised on our whiteboard prints that in doing so we were not exploring *organisation structure*.

The performance evaluation issue had become very important to the review, based on the dilemma of what would Corporate Services’ accountability be if its role was reactive and non strategic (as was largely the case before the review). There was also external pressure to resolve this question as State Government (and the Auditor General in particular) required agency results to be reported against performance measures in agency annual reports.

The decision to change the agenda and follow a different line of analysis highlighted for me the need for the facilitator to be flexible and to know when to make changes, while constantly monitoring process to ensure that any changes will be in keeping with the agreed methodology.

The results of the rest of the workshop were:

## Human Resources (HR)

### Why Should the Activity Exist?

HR was quite advanced in its thinking in comparison to other Corporate Services branches, and had previously developed its objectives and operational plan. I had chosen HR as the first resource area for discussion as I considered each of the three HR representatives on the Working Party to be forward thinking and expected that they could set the style for other resource areas. This did occur, and their format in answering the questions became the guide for the other resource areas.

The HR representatives quickly arrived at the following answer to the question of role:

*To provide expertise to:*

- *Develop and coordinate HR policy, practices and standards*
- *Provide HR services and advice*

*Creating the environment to maximise the potential of the Crown Law Department employees, meeting both individual and corporate needs."*

I recognised this as a change in thinking, since the current role of HR was predominantly process related, with a much lesser focus on training, advice and supporting organisation reviews.

### How Will We Know If We Are Successful?

The agreement was:

- *Managers accepting responsibility for their staff: ie*
  - *Staff retention (Turnover reasons)*
  - *Feedback from staff (Performance appraisal)*
  - *Ethical behaviour (Legislative compliance)*
  - *Attitude Ethos/Sick Leave Reasons*
  - *Decreased industrial action*
  - *Many staff to choose from for positions*
  - *Level of demand (Reasons)*
- *Payroll accuracy and timeliness*
- *Clients' view of Corporate Services HR*

This progressed the view of Corporate Services' accountability, as HR were agreeing that their success could be measured by the extent to which Programme Managers were accepting responsibility for managing their staff. This was a brave step forward as it was considered by Corporate Services that there were significant HR problems in some of the Programme areas; that in these areas staff management did not appear to be considered a priority; and that Corporate Services' influence was very much overshadowed by the power and status of some of the autonomous Programme areas. I noted that there was still the operational view, however, in "payroll accuracy and timeliness".

I felt that asking these questions had moved thinking forward significantly and that Weltanschauungen were beginning to change.

## Finance

### Why Should the Activity Exist?

The response below was developed by the Working Party overall (with some key players) rather than by the Finance representatives, as had been the case with the HR questions.

*To provide expertise to:*

- *Develop and coordinate financial management policy*
- *Provide financial and accounting services and advice*

*To secure the immediate and long term financial viability of the Department.*

This was a very progressive statement, and there was considerable debate whether Finance could secure the immediate and long term financial viability of the Department, given the economic climate, and the vagaries of government policy and fund allocation. However, Glen Coffey and a few others expressed the view that some group had to take this responsibility if the Department was to survive financially, and if not Finance, who else?

### How Will We Know If We Are Successful?

The response again was a mix of strategic thinking and the pragmatics of the current operational role.

- *Processing accuracy and timeliness*
- *Clients' feedback*
- *Meaningful and timely financial information*
- *Availability of funds when required by programmes*
- *Auditor General endorses the financial report*
- *Extent to which available financial resources are optimised*
- *Audit queries (number and type)*

I believed the two items which contributed most to Weltanschauungen were:

Availability of funds when required by programmes,

Extent to which available financial resources are optimised.

Both these items had an impact on the conceptual activity model which was developed for Finance.

## Information Resource Management

Thinking had developed to use the term Information Resource Management, rather than the previous separation in the workshop of Information and Technology as two separate resource areas.

This thinking seemed to evolve naturally, although at one of the Information Management workshops there was a challenge from one IT participant who believed in the separate identity of IT. He claimed that there had been a conspiracy at lunch time on Workshop 3 (and it was implied that this was a conspiracy between the facilitator and members of the management team).

The allegation was a shock to me. Certainly I expected that sub groups of the Working Party would discuss items outside the workshops, but felt all decisions were made together in workshop sessions. In addition, although Glen Coffey and Les Cooper (the IT Manager) were supporters of the Information Resource Management view, they never took a dominant role or enforced their opinions in the workshops. It may be that my support for the Information Management consolidation must have been apparent, even though I was trying to be unbiased as the facilitator.

We debated the allegation in the workshop, decided to stay with Information Resource Management, and recognised that some participants held an alternative view. However, I realised that my view of the high degree of harmony in the Working Party was over optimistic. I understood more about the realistic expectations for cohesion in workshops in my interview with Dr Jim Scholes (Appendix 4). His view was that, in general, there will be one-third of participants actively supporting new direction, one-third neutral, and one-third against.

Information Management:  
Why Should the Activity Exist?

*To provide expertise to:*

- *Develop and coordinate information policy, information standards and information dissemination*
- *Provide information services covering Library, Records, Information Systems and Information Technology.*

*Creating an environment where the information is available to meet the current and future information needs of the Department.*

The CLD Library was not under the control of Corporate Services, and this caused some alarm amongst some participants, perhaps because of the perceived power base of the Programme area which controlled the CLD Library. Therefore, a note was made on the whiteboard as follows:

*Library: Not implying overall management of the function.*

In fact events again overtook this assumption, although this time instigated by Corporate Services Managers, and within several weeks a review was started to analyse Library futures (Case Study 2).

How Will We Know If We Are Successful?

- *Client feedback*
- *Increased computer literacy, awareness and appreciation*
- *Increased productivity in CLD*

- *Systems meet objectives*
- *IS/IT plans agreed and achieved to budget*
- *IS/IT can be supported, upgraded and enhanced*
- *Extent to which information meets needs*
- *Achievement against service level standards*
- *Information security.*

IT was already measuring its performance by criteria such as “IS/IT plans agreed and achieved to budget”, “IS/IT can be supported, upgraded and enhanced” and “Achievement against service level standards”. The shift in thinking related especially to the accountability for the extent to which information meets needs, which was a much wider Weltanschauung than simply successfully introducing information technology.

Given the resource management focus which had developed it was decided to hold two workshops outside the full Working Party to address the role of the executive, and whether the non-resource (administrative) responsibilities of Corporate Services were more ideally located elsewhere in CLD.

Both these workshops were successful in confirming the resource management scope of Corporate Services, clearly delineated from the executive and other administrative tasks. The results of these workshops were fed back to the Working Party and agreed. They had little impact on others, except the Finance Manager who was responsible for administration, and he had been a key player at the workshop which decided the future for administration, and Glen Coffey who carried an Executive role (Assistant Under Secretary for Law) as well as that of Director, Corporate Services.

Successive workshops (without the full Working Party) further analysed and modelled the future role of the Executive, and tested the thinking against the internal client representatives.

### Asset Management

We realised that there was another Resource Management area outside Corporate Services which managed court buildings and reported to the Court Services Division. There were concerns about the huge workload and under-staffing of this area, and Don Doig requested that we include the area in our review. As a result a workshop was convened outside the main Working Party to bring this area to the level of analysis of the rest of the resource areas.

We called the activity Asset Management and included the procurement, vehicles and building management responsibilities of Corporate Services in the boundary. This group then joined the main Working Party.

### Why Should the Activity Exist?

*To provide expertise to:*

- *Develop and coordinate Asset Management planning, policy, procedures and standards*
- *Provide services and advice*

*In order to optimise the acquisition and management of assets and enable programmes to achieve their objectives.*



### How Will We Know If We Were Successful?

- *Client feedback*
- *Overall Asset Management plan in place and endorsed*
- *Value for money, ie \$s saved*
- *Programme Review group feedback*
- *Support of Central Agencies for our strategies*
- *Meeting standards*
- *Quality and reliability of the asset to meet needs - Number and extent of repairs required*
- *Meeting the asset requirements of our clients.*

Again, I considered this a mixed strategic and operational response, with the more strategic being “Value for money, ie \$s saved” (which the Court buildings function was already monitoring), and “Meeting the asset requirements of our clients”.

### WORKSHOPS FOR EACH RESOURCE AREA

(Carried out between 19th October and 13th November 1992)

One half-day and one full-day workshop was then facilitated for each resource area. We had decided to change the participants for these workshops so that each involved Glen Coffey, Neil Hunter, Working Party Members from the Resource Area, plus additional personnel from the Resource Area. Our aim was to introduce more participants into the workshops, and hence increase ownership and organisational learning.

I had some concerns that the new participants had not had the opportunity of direct involvement in the debate and decisions of earlier workshops, but to include them earlier would have increased numbers beyond that which I considered to be a manageable level. The agenda of the first of the three workshops for each resource area reflected my attempt to bring these new participants “up to speed”.

In addition I was concerned that the holistic nature of the analysis would be lost. To overcome this we had the continuity of Glen and Neil at all sessions, and we convened a Working Party workshop once this series was concluded to synthesise outcomes and learning.

Agendas were:

#### First Half Day:

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| 8.30 - 8.45  | Feedback from last workshop                                   |
| 8.45 - 9.15  | Identify issues for the future                                |
| 9.15 - 10.15 | Review the role and performance measures (from last workshop) |
|              | Identify clients  |

- 9.15 - 10.15    Review the role and performance measures (from last workshop)
- Identify clients
- (Review feedback from internal and external clients)
- Identify external constraints
- 10.15 - 10.30                Morning Tea
- 10.30 - 11.15    Strengths & Weaknesses
- 11.15 - 12.15    Sub Activities required in order to carry out the role
- 12.15 - 12.30    Preparation for next workshop
- (This will be a full day workshop in which we will identify for each sub activity:
- roles
- models
- strategies
- skills
- staff numbers)

#### Resource Models (Sub Activities)

At each workshop the generic high level activity model was used as the basis for developing a model specific to each resource area, as follows:

Figure 8:

**2nd Level Model: HR (Revised Version)**

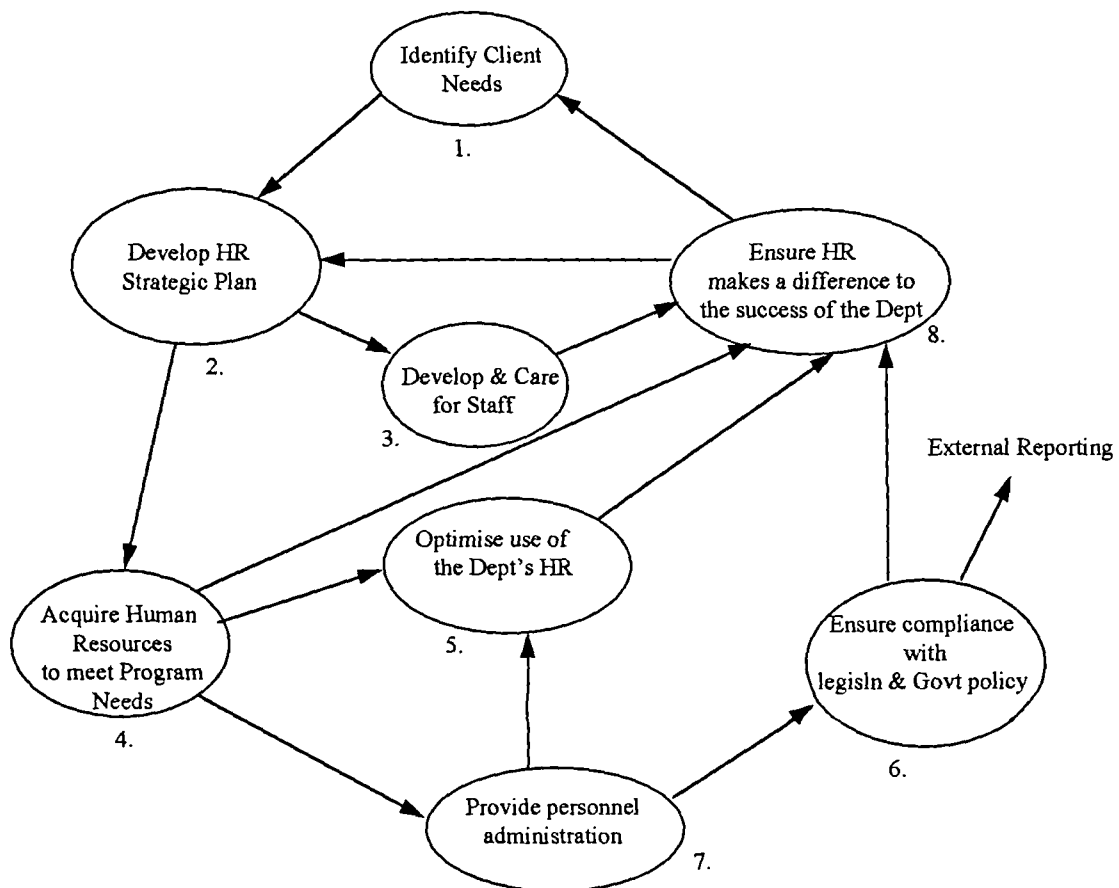


Figure 9:

### 2nd Level Model: Information Resource

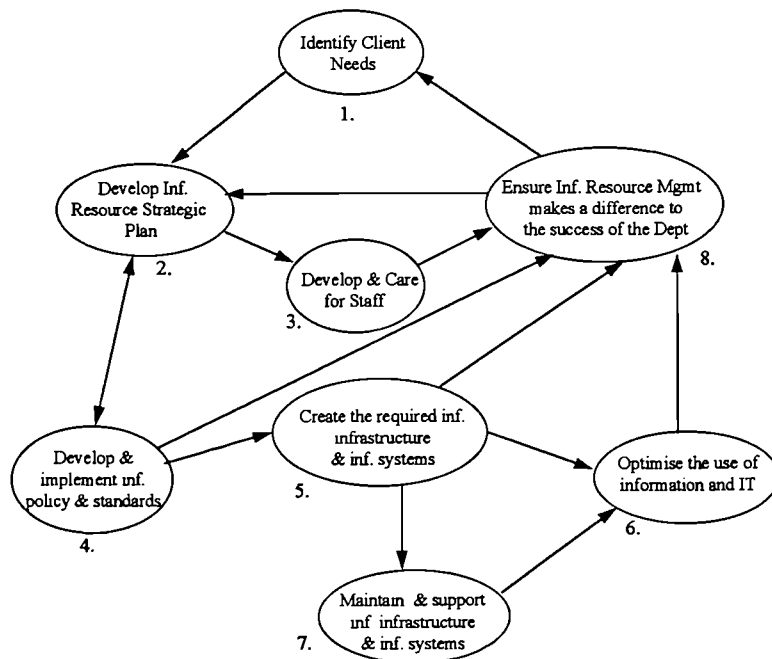


Figure 10:

### 2nd Level Model: Finance

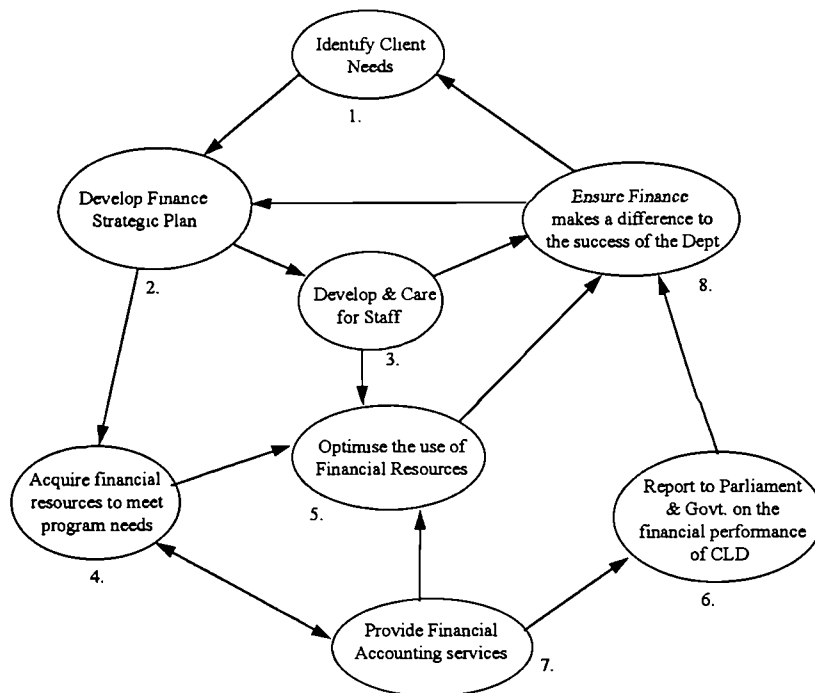
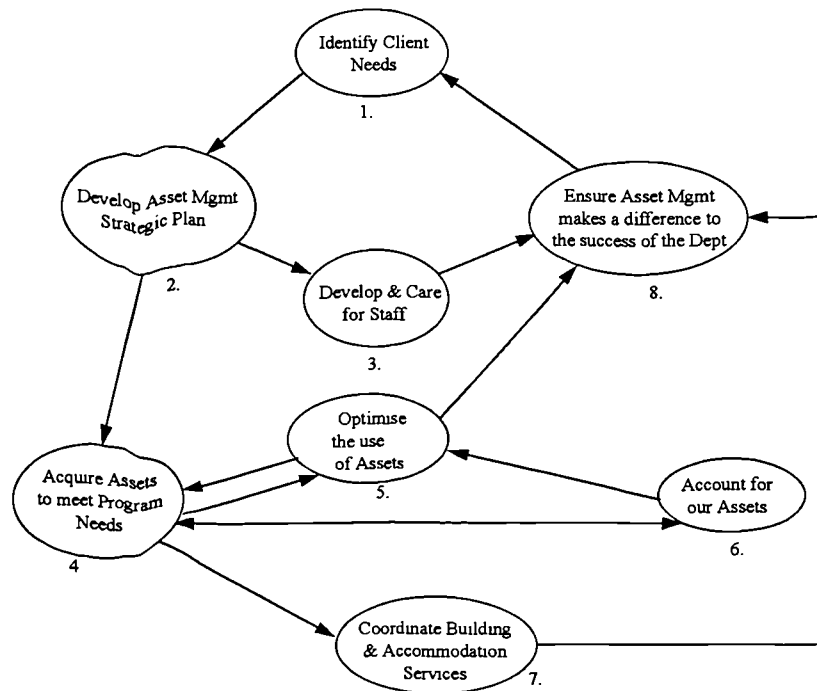


Figure 11:

### 2nd Level Model: Assets



In each case the Activity 1, “Identify Client Needs”, remained unchanged. Activity 2 became “Develop a strategic plan for each resource area”. Activity 3, “Develop and Care for Staff” became specific to the resource area. Activity 4 remained unchanged (although in later analysis this activity was removed as it underpinned every other activity in the model and could not stand alone).

The major analysis occurred in relation to the Activity 5 in the high level model, “Develop and Implement Support Strategy”. Taking the view that this represented the core process which made each resource area unique, quite indepth debate ensued in each workshop to break this into four or five core activities, as follows:

For HR:

- Acquire Human Resources to meet programme needs
- Optimise the use of the Department’s human resources
- Ensure compliance with legislation and government policy
- Provide personnel administration (ie the process related task)

For Information Resource Management:

- Develop and implement information policy and standards
- Create the required information infrastructure and information systems
- Optimise the use of information and information technology
- Develop industry relationships
- Maintain and support the information infrastructure and information systems (the process related task)

For Finance:

- Acquire financial resources to meet programme needs
- Optimise the use of financial resources
- Report to parliament and government on the financial performance of CLD
- Provide financial accounting services (the process related task)

For Assets:

- Acquire assets to meet programme needs
- Optimise the use of assets
- Account for assets
- Coordinate building and accommodation services (the process related task)

Again the HR workshop had provided the lead for the other resource areas. At the time I was pleased with the relative ease with which the models developed. In hindsight it might have been a more powerful learning experience if other resource areas had struggled more with the definition of their core activities, rather than follow HR. In contract, HR had taken their definition so seriously that they rejected the first model which was developed in their workshop, did some urgent work in the branch, and submitted their second version as shown above. They had substituted an Activity 7 which had been called “Carry Out Workplace Reform to Achieve Programme Needs” with “Ensure Compliance with Legislation and Government Policy”.

Most significantly the evaluation and feedback activity in each model, which had been called rather blandly “Evaluate Corporate Services Success” in the high level model became “Ensure ... makes a difference to the success of the Department”. As mentioned previously, the word “ensure” had caused a great deal of debate - How could Corporate Services ensure anything?. I felt there had been a real move forward in clarifying Weltanschauungen if the resource areas were now prepared to see their role as ensuring that they made a difference to the Department’s success. However, this had not been achieved without vigorous debate and a great deal of trepidation on the part of some workshop participants.

In the following full day workshop each Resource Area proceeded to analyse each Activity in their resource model to decide what action needed to be taken. In SSM terms we were carrying out Gap Analysis. Questions were developed to provide a framework for the analysis, ie

Why will we carry out this activity?

(in effect the Weltanschauungen)

How will we carry out this activity?

(ie what are the sub activities and what is different to the current way of operating - in some cases conceptual activity models were drawn to further clarify what was involved)

Resource Implications

(This was especially relevant because the project was an organisational review and some reallocation of resources, and especially personnel, was always considered a potential outcome. Debate involved identifying whether the activity was currently

carried out and if so, how well, whether skills were available, and what the manpower requirements would be.)

During this process the term Information Resource Management was shortened to Information Management.

Throughout all the workshops the debate concerning the above questions resulted in the definition of a more strategic focus for Corporate Services and a gradual movement away from processing tasks, many of which it was expected would be devolved or outsourced. (This demonstrated iteration within the SSM process.) Examples of the more strategic perspective are shown below. I have identified the Activity, the Resource Area, and the sample “how”.

**Identify Client Needs (HR):**

Rich integration of Corporate Services people in the development of Programme Strategic Plans.

**Optimise the Use of the Department’s Human Resources (HR):**

Educate our clients and individuals in how to optimise their HR.

**Create the Required Information Infrastructure and Information Systems (Information Management):**

Develop expertise and strategies for management of change - involving other Corporate Service areas as necessary.

**Optimise the Use of Information and Information Technology (Information Management):**

Develop an ongoing strategic relationship between an Information Resource team and a Programme Manager.

**Develop and Care for Staff (Finance):**

Include in performance evaluation of all managers and supervisors their effectiveness in developing and caring for staff.

**Optimise the Use of Financial Resources (Finance):**

Work with Programme Managers to monitor and analyse revenue and expenditure and identify opportunities to reallocate funds. (Reallocation decisions across programmes are recommended to the Executive.)

**Acquire Assets to Meet Programme Needs (Assets):**

Educate clients on deciding best options for asset acquisition.

**Optimise the Use of Assets (Assets):**

Apply value management process to evaluate the suitability/utilisation of existing assets.

Some far-reaching implications were recognised once the outputs of this workshop series were debated amongst the Working Party.

Firstly, if Corporate Services was to achieve a strategic perspective, CLD programmes would need a process of identifying strategic needs, ie strategic planning processes. It was therefore

decided that there would be a role in the Executive group to coordinate strategic planning across CLD.

Secondly, it would be impractical for each resource area independently to identify client needs by interacting with the clients' strategic planning process. This would need to be a coordinated approach from Corporate Services.

Thirdly, with so many activities in common (of the activity models) it was critical that there was a strategic planning process across Corporate Services. The "How" strategies identified in the resource area workshops could be the basis for developing the first Corporate Services strategic plan.

Fourth, there may be potential to extend the concept of client teams which had worked well in HR, to wider client teams across resource areas, in order to coordinate Corporate Services relationships with clients.

Finally, each Corporate Services resource area was dependent on other resource areas; they were each other's clients; that is each needed assistance from HR, Finances, Information and Assets.

Resource implications were questioned for each activity. In almost all cases it was recognised that there was a requirement for further development of skills (or acquisition of entirely new skills), reallocation of resources, and shedding of some process tasks. The degree of gap between the current situation and the vision for the future which was being developed did lead to some disquiet amongst some Working Party members as to whether this much change could be achieved (ie in SSM terms, "Is the new view of the human activity system culturally feasible and systemically desirable?"). At this point Glen Coffey encouraged the Working Party to maintain the strategic vision, but to recognise that inevitably there would be interim steps to achieving this vision.

#### WORKING PARTY WORKSHOP 4

17 November 1992, 8.30 to 12.30

This was the last workshop of the full Working Party which I facilitated, although I did attend a progress meeting on 5 January 1993 at which my questionnaires were completed.

This workshop was largely an information sharing and consolidation forum in preparation for more detailed work on structures which would be facilitated by Neil Hunter and his HR team.

#### **Agenda**

1. Informal presentation from each Resource Area - How we will assist other Corporate Services branches

(The outputs of each workshop had been circulated to each Working Party participant. They had then met in their resource areas and considered this question prior to the workshop.)

I believe this was a very fruitful exchange and increased the bonds and mutual dependencies between Corporate Services branches which had previously seen themselves as independent from each other.



2. Any amendments to the analysis so far.

Nothing of significance emerged here.

3. Models.

We discussed models and I circulated a complete set of all lower level models, developed in various workshops. These were to be used in the following sessions with Neil Hunter to develop organisational structure.

4. Teamwork within your Branch, across Corporate Services.

This was the issue of developing client teams. There was agreement that the team based approach had worked well in HR. IT were keen to develop teams, and Finance liked the principle but was unsure how it could apply to some of the processing tasks. It was too early for the impact of teams to be assessed for Assets, as the personnel were still scattered in different branches. It was agreed that the potential for client teams with representatives from all resource areas should be evaluated.

5. Role for Corporate Services.

This was agreed and is discussed below.

6. Name for Corporate Services.

There was some debate about changing the name to reflect that a change in role had occurred and that the group would now be more strategic rather than service delivery in focus. However, no agreed name emerged, and by default we stayed with the name Corporate Services for the time being.

7. Alternative Structures for Corporate Services.

### Corporate Services Role

The role for the Corporate Services of the future was finally agreed. To do this we revisited some of the favourite draft statements from earlier workshops and then recognised the way our thinking had developed, i.e.

- Corporate Services are about:
  - resource planning
  - resource policy and standards
  - resource services
- Corporate Services has end of line responsibility for resource policy and resource optimisation
- Role statement must have an outcome.

The Corporate Services role was then agreed as:

*To improve the administration of justice through strategies to optimise the acquisition and management of the Department's resources.*

In addition, a slogan for Corporate Services was agreed.

*"Right resources, right place, right time."*

This slogan had been used informally throughout the workshops, although I did not record when or how it first appeared. Morgan, as part of the cultural metaphor of an organisation highlights the use of such slogans to communicate central values and symbolise corporate philosophy. He gives examples of "IBM means service", "No surprises" (Holiday Inns), "Never kill a new product idea" (3M). (Morgan 1986, p 133)

In our debate about role and accountability we used the following example to differentiate between Corporate Services and Programme Managers.

- Corporate Services was responsible for CLD's overall performance in human resource issues such as equal employment opportunity.
- If CLD was considered by internal and external stakeholders to have a poor record in relation to equal employment opportunity then Corporate Services HR group is accountable.
- If a single Programme Manager performs poorly in relation to equal employment opportunity then Corporate Services HR would be expected to identify this, assist the Manager to improve, and if this fails, then draw the problem to the attention of the Executive. If no improvement was achieved Corporate Services HR would not be regarded as unsuccessful in relation to equal employment opportunity issues.

I noticed that while arriving at a decision on role had seemed to be an important and urgent issue - even a stumbling block - to some Working Party members, it seemed less important now. I believe this was because the understanding of role (ie Weltanschauung) had evolved, there was shared understanding, and the formal statement therefore seemed only a by-product. However, from my perspective *I believed there had been a significant shift in* Weltanschauungen, from reactive, process oriented, service provision to a proactive, strategic role in contributing to CLD outcomes by optimising resources - people, money, information, and physical assets. I looked forward to testing this assumption in questionnaires to see if the facilitator's views were reflected in the beliefs of the participants.

### Structure

There had been discussions amongst the management team outside the workshop, and in the workshop a template for organisation structure was suggested, debated and agreed as the basis for more detailed analysis of structure in the resource areas. The template reinforced the concept of client teams.

## RECORDS MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

At a project review meeting following Working Party workshop 4, Glen Coffey expressed concerns that the thinking had not advanced far enough for Records Management (in comparison to other areas), and that more analysis needed to be done before addressing organisational structure for this area, as part of Information Management. At the time the Records area had a process focus - collecting, opening, filing and distributing correspondence, and few professionally trained personnel.

We therefore decided to hold a further workshop involving members from Records, Library and IT, as well as the CEO, Don Doig, (who had raised Records Management issues in our first interview) and a number of internal client representatives. I facilitated the workshop which was held on 23rd November 1992 and lasted three hours.

This meeting developed a broad scope for the Records Management activity, encompassing, at a policy level, paper based and electronic records, administrative and court records, and legal files, i.e. the corporate memory.

Issues to be addressed were policy on information management, improved access to information, security, Programme Managers' responsibilities, and problems relating to distribution of information.

It was agreed that the vision was for any information appropriate to the needs of the individual to be accessible, timely, accurate and integrated.

Strategies included moving more information to electronic format and ensuring retrievability by key word access to contents and information sources. There was to be a corporate responsibility for policy, standards, integrated access, and systems. Investigation was required to determine the feasibility of devolving day to day records management to programmes.

I felt the meeting had been fruitful and gave a better base for development of organisational structures.

## WORKING PARTY REVIEW MEETING

5 January 1993

Just prior to this meeting I had asked Glen Coffey and Neil Hunter whether I might use the review as a case study for this PhD research. They readily agreed. By this time both of them (and Les Cooper) had become very enthusiastic about the approach I had been using for the review, thought the models were very powerful, and were enthusiastic to assist my research. I requested that a questionnaire be completed by Working Party members to assist my research, and we decided to incorporate this in a forthcoming Working Party Review Meeting which Neil would facilitate. The questionnaire is presented and analysed in Chapter 6.)

### **Agenda**

#### **1. Progress update**

Neil Hunter reported that development of organisational structure was progressing well, except for the Assets area which was behind schedule. Structures, roles, responsibilities, job descriptions and classifications were being developed. A consistent approach was being used to develop structures.

All personnel were participating and HR branch was assisting the process. All areas had adopted client teams except Accounting which had functional teams.

2. Next Phases of Review

The next steps would be to sell the results of the review to internal clients, gain endorsement of the Steering Committee, liaise with external clients, link to the budget process, develop an implementation strategy (with participation from employees), write the project report, and develop the Corporate Services strategic plan.

3. Impact of 1993 State Election

Unease was beginning to develop on this issue and questions were asked by Working Party members. The election was two months away and the opposition Liberal Party were indicating that if they won office they intended to create a Ministry of Justice in which CLD would be only one part. Glen Coffey assured the Working Party that the analysis carried out in the review was critical, whether or not there was a change of government, and would place Corporate Services strategically, whatever the outcome.

4. Review Questionnaire - Liz Pattison

My questionnaire was completed by Working Party members before they left the meeting.

### THE WAY OUR THINKING DEVELOPED

At an informal meeting with Don Doig, Glen Coffey and Neil Hunter towards the end of my involvement as facilitator, I summarised for them the way I perceived our thinking had developed throughout the review. This was my analysis, but it was confirmed by Glen and Neil. However, I did not test whether this view was held by any of the other Working Party members. My summary was as follows:

1. Corporate services role should involve resource planning, policy, standards and services.
2. The resource types are Finance, HR, Information, and Assets.
3. All resources are interlinked and interdependent. (eg There are finance, information and asset implications of managing human resources.)
4. To justify its existence Corporate Services must make a difference to CLD programme outcomes. Therefore, Corporate Services has end of line responsibility for resource policy and resource optimisation. To achieve this Corporate Services must be proactive and strategic.
5. Corporate Services cannot achieve its strategic outcomes if clients (ie programmes) do not have strategic plans.

6. In addition, the Under Secretary for Law (Don Doig) requires overall CLD performance information. It is difficult to identify performance measures if there are no strategic plans.
7. The traditional centralised Corporate Strategic Plan is not appropriate for CLD because of programme autonomy. Instead the Under Secretary for Law's Office should be a catalyst and coordinator for programmes to develop their own strategic plans.
8. Programme autonomy probably requires a matrix type approach across Corporate Services (ie Resources teams for each Programme/Client).

### EVENTS AFTER THE REVIEW

Organisational structures were developed, steering committee endorsement achieved and the final report written when the change of government occurred in March 1993. One of the new Liberal Government's earliest strategies was to create a Ministry of Justice incorporating Crown Law Department, Corrective Services and Juvenile Justice. The Chief Executive of Corrective Services was made acting head of the new Ministry. Teams were urgently established to implement the new Ministry (and timeframes were very short).

I was asked to assist in a small way with project planning and facilitated two workshops early in the project for the team which had the task of creating a new Corporate Services for the Ministry. Cost reduction (including reduced staff numbers) in providing corporate services was an expected outcome.

This was a difficult time for many of the people I had worked with in CLD (and no doubt for members of the other agencies). There were concerns that the cultures of CLD and Corrective Services were very different.

*In my small involvement with the Ministry's Corporate Services team, which had representatives from the three agencies, I observed that the methodology we had used for our review was being used with familiarity and understanding by the CLD participants, and that they were clearly differentiated from the other participants by the way they could discuss confidently the strategic role to be played by Corporate Services, and related structural and resourcing implications. However, not all the thinking from our review remained intact, and the Executive and Minister of the new Ministry did not accept the concept of client teams.*

Significantly, for me, at a farewell party for CLD, the former CLD Finance Manager who had been a Working Party member thanked me for teaching them all the methodology which had stood them in good stead in their organisational review work in the Ministry. His perception of "being taught" was interesting, because we never formally taught or discussed methodology during our review.

Soon after the creation of the Ministry Don Doig took early retirement and Glen Coffey moved to another agency.

## **Case Study 2: Crown Law Department (CLD)**

### **Review of Library Services**

Glen Coffey, Assistant Under Secretary for Law, approached me on 1st October 1992, while Case Study 1 was underway, to take a similar role in a Review of Library Services. Despite constraints on my time I agreed to help based on Glen's emphasis on the criticality of the project and the need for my support - which gave me feedback that CLD were happy with my facilitation of the Corporate Services Review in which, at that stage, Workshop 2 had just been completed.

I was also interested in the Review of Library Services because I have a bachelors degree in librarianship and it was an area in which I still had an interest. In retrospect I realise this may have made me more biased than in Case Study 1, as I held views that there were great opportunities for librarians to take a wider role in meeting an organisation's information needs, but believed that few librarians were seizing this opportunity.

My involvement in the review was between October and December 1992.

### **THE REASON FOR THE REVIEW**

Glen Coffey explained that there was an urgent need to review Library Services because of a \$110,000 budget shortfall which had to be resolved by mid January 1993. In effect, the State Government's Expenditure Review Committee would not fund the shortfall until a review had been undertaken.

In addition, the Chief Justice had written to the Under Secretary for Law (Don Doig) asking for a review of Supreme Court Library requirements as the Supreme Court was not happy with the current provision.

The instigation of this project was thus different to Case Study 1, and much closer to Checkland's work where there is a "soft" ill-structured problem to be resolved. Added to this, previous attempts, using "hard" approaches, to resolve the problems of the library services had failed.

As Glen gave background information I realised the complex, political reasons for the review, and that these issues were likely to impact on the progress of the project, which certainly was the case.

Within CLD there were two separate library services:

Firstly CLD had a network of libraries reporting to the Crown Solicitor, and funded from the CLD budget. The main library was in the CLD administrative building and was used almost exclusively by legal personnel from the offices of the Crown Solicitor and the Director of Public Prosecutions. There were also a number of remote libraries and collections (none with permanent staff), ie:

- Supreme Court Judges' Library (but cataloguing and binding by Law Library)
- Supreme Court Chambers' Collection for each Judge
- District Court Judges' Library
- District Court Judges' Chambers Collections
- Children's Court Library

- Magistrates' Library
- Family Court Judges' Library

Secondly there was the Supreme Court Law Library serving the legal profession and judiciary, funded 50% by the Barristers Board and 50% by CLD. The Law Library also maintained a collection at the District Court building.

The two groups of libraries did not cooperate - in fact they had a history of hostility, even to the extent of the librarians not speaking to each other. The two groups of libraries also had different classification systems. In organisational status the CLD Librarian (level 6) was senior to the Law Librarian (level 5).

Glen's perception was that the Supreme Court Law Library was well funded, well stocked, and well used. Their major clients were perhaps the most powerful and prestigious group in the CLD environment - the Supreme Court judges. The Law Library had developed an operational plan and reported quarterly to a Management Committee chaired by a senior Supreme Court Judge. Glen was a member of the Management Committee, representing CLD. The Law Library had recently made a \$25,000 saving to resolve a budget shortfall.

Glen knew less about the CLD Library Service, was concerned about the \$110,000 budget shortfall, and understood that the Supreme Court Judges were unhappy with the service they received from the CLD (via the Supreme Court Judges library and Chambers collections) and preferred to use the Law Library. In addition, while the budget for the CLD Library Service was allocated to Corporate Services, the Library was controlled by the Crown Solicitor.

Glen was also concerned about duplication. For example, in the Supreme Court building there was the Law Library, the Judges Library, and the collection in each judge's chamber. Each new judge was granted \$30,000 to establish his chambers' collection. A similar situation existed in the District Court.

I realised that there is a huge reliance on libraries in the legal environment because of the dependence on case law and precedent.

Glen suggested that a similar approach be taken in the Review of Library Services to the Corporate Services Review. At this stage I again did not request permission to use the project as PhD research (nor had I at that stage made the request with regard to the Corporate Services Review), for reasons of having a real business study against which to test my research themes. However, I saw the opportunity of comparing two almost concurrent studies in one organisation, using the same methodology and some of the same participants. I expected this to give me a richer understanding of sub cultures and assist me to overcome too generalised conclusions. In my personal account of the Review of Library Services which follows I compare and contrast it with the Corporate Services Review.

## **PROJECT PLAN**

We met our first political difficulties in attempting to finalise the project plan. There was unease about the project on the part of the librarians, the Crown Solicitor and the Supreme Court Chair of the Law Library Management Committee, Justice Ipp. This required a number of hastily convened meetings by Glen Coffey to resolve concerns about the project, its approach and potential outcomes (and especially the likelihood of one library service taking over the responsibilities of the other, or the library budget or collections being reduced). There

was also the question from the CLD librarians as to why there was a requirement for a review when they had already written extensive reports justifying more staff, and these, they believed, had been ignored.

The need for Glen to attend such reconciliation meetings continued throughout the early part of the project as concerns arose, based on misunderstanding of what was happening in the workshops. This situation had not arisen in Case Study 1 because all managers within the scope of the study were members of the Working Party, the Chief Executive Officer (Don Doig) was on the Steering Committee, Glen had clear authority to run the project, and there were no extreme political sensitivities involved. In contrast, it was not politically feasible to have senior judges and senior lawyers as members of the Library Review Working Party, and there were many other political issues such as the Crown Solicitor's support for the Crown Law Librarian and her control of the Supreme Court Judges' Library versus the Chief Justice's support for the Supreme Court Law Librarian and his desire for her to take over all libraries at the Supreme Court. .

Eventually, Terms of Reference were agreed. The project used the same approach as the Corporate Services Review so far as being based on SSM and workshops. However there was no Steering Committee, and, as shown by the "Background" statement, there was an expectation that some "hard" analysis would be needed, outside the workshops, to determine library collection requirements and associated costs, as shown by the quote below from the project plan.

#### "Background"

There are difficulties in meeting the expectations of clients with respect to the provision of library services within the Department.

The purpose of this review is to define the information needs of clients, seek agreement on the standards of service delivery in meeting those needs, and to ensure resources are obtained and maintained to meet those standards."

It was intended to gather this "hard" data by interview, but this also caused great concern, even to the extent of who would be appropriate to do the interviewing (ie the staff from which library service). In the end a limited number of interviews were conducted by the two senior librarians and the rest of the information was gathered by questionnaire.

Even the formulation of the questionnaire caused concern. It was not possible from a political perspective to ask for strengths, weaknesses, or opinions on the various library services. Rather the focus had to be solely on collection items and library services required, with priorities. Further confusion arose when Mr Justice Ipp went ahead on 20 October with his own questionnaire to all Supreme Court Judges, asking them to comment on his proposed solutions for Supreme Court Library Services (before the project questionnaire was ready).

Neil Hunter was again Project Manager, I was facilitator and Working Party Membership was:

- Assistant Under Secretary for Law (Glen Coffey)
- Librarian, CLD Library
- Staff Members, CLD Library
- Librarian, Law Library
- Staff Members, Law Library
- Manager, Information Technology



The involvement of the Manager, IT (Les Cooper) was important because of the emerging debate in the Corporate Services Review about management of the Information resource.

## **The PROGRESS OF THE CASE STUDY**

### **Pre-Workshop Meetings**

Unlike Case Study 1 there was no launch for this project. There was still a degree of unease and political misunderstanding occurring, so given the small number of staff involved in the two library services, it was decided that I would meet, either individually or in groups, with all personnel from the two library services.

It was clear at these meetings that the library personnel were anxious to put their case, and I decided to explain the review process and then simply listen rather than use the structured interview format of the Corporate Services Review. That is I made a business decision, although it may have been to the detriment of my research. However, the issues raised at these meetings included a range of perceptions which were an indication of culture and values (and culture continued to be vividly demonstrated during the workshops).

These issues raised in the pre-workshop meetings included:

From the Law Library Staff:

- There is little use of the Supreme Court Judges Library provided by CLD, it probably is not up-to-date, and its use is questioned given that there are Chambers collections. However, items in the Judges' Chambers are not kept up-to-date (eg Statutes), causing them to use the Law Library's copies instead.
- The Law Library at the District Court is well used by Judges, Magistrates and practitioners.
- The Supreme Court Law Library plays a key role in Court activities and requests for information are heavy just before Court commences. The Library also purchases items on demand for judges, often in response to urgent requests; provides online information searches of external databases; trains judges' staff in library use; and publishes a number of current awareness services.
- It takes too long for the Judges to get things from the CLD Library.
- Users are happy with the library service. 73% of users are Court staff.
- The Law Library has a "leading edge" focus for technology. (This related to online searching of external databases and CD ROMS. The Library had not yet implemented library management software and all processing tasks were carried out manually.)
- There are severe staffing problems, with no-one to relieve for the Senior Librarian.

- Law Library and CLD Library have different cultures. The Law Library has an open door policy, including to the legal profession and other government agencies. The CLD Library is closed to outsiders.
- The Law Library is nurtured by the Board (to which it reports), however, Glen Coffey plays the informal role of “boss”.

From the CLD Library Staff:

- There are problems for users because the remote libraries are self service, but there are insufficient staff to overcome this problem, and only occasional visits can be made.
- There are no visits by CLD staff to the Supreme Court Judges’ Library which is overseen by the Chief Justice’s Secretary. Judges have their own collections, and may try this Library, but will then go to the Law Library for assistance. However, District Court Judges know to come to the CLD Judges’ Library for assistance.
- There are problems in providing services to regional courts and to judges while on circuit.
- Staff shortages are so severe that the Senior Librarian is performing processing tasks.
- A computerised library management system is being implemented but circulation is still manual.
- There is no electronic access to external databases from CLD Libraries because CLD lawyers want their junior staff to learn to search manually for legal information.
- Reference services (eg Selective Dissemination of Information) are limited by the staffing shortages. The number of inter library loan requests is growing, especially in new areas such as AIDS.
- An outcome of the review must be a clear role for both CLD and Law Libraries.

From both groups there was a sense of no-one in the organisation caring that they were struggling with staff shortages, and this was having a negative effect on service delivery (in the case of CLD libraries) and on morale for both groups. Neither group really “belonged” organisationally - ie did not attend staff meetings of a wider group, or have a close relationship with a manager who cared for their welfare (although Glen Coffey was beginning informally to take on this role for the Law Library).

## **The Workshops**

The Review of Library Services involved five workshops, ranging between 3.5 and 8 hours in length, and conducted between 26th October and 18th November 1992. Due to workload pressures, the two senior librarians were eventually relieved of their other responsibilities in order to concentrate full-time on the project. (This had not happened with any personnel in the Corporate Services Review.) In addition, because of these pressures there was little chance for the librarians to debate the early workshops with their staff and bring ideas forward, as had happened in the Corporate Services Review.

The climate of the first workshop was tense and cool, with clear camps between the two library groups, and a tendency to want to lay blame, which proved a facilitating challenge. At the second workshop the senior librarians had brought different supporters from amongst their staff and within minutes of the workshop opening extremely heated accusations were instigated by one of these supporters, causing retaliation from the opposing group. It was the most conflict ridden workshop I have ever experienced and I eventually decided to stop proceedings and begin a debate on appropriate behaviour.

The management team members of the Working Party were so embarrassed that flowers were delivered to me the next day at a Corporate Services Review workshop. I reflected whether I needed to add to my four workshop “rules” (no rank, alternative viewpoints, all ideas are good ideas, participation), a fifth rule about behaviour. However, from my interviews with other researchers (and especially Chris Atkinson and Jim Scholes), conflict may have an important role in arriving at shared vision. (See Appendix 4.)

From this point on the tension reduced at the library workshops and harmony began to develop, although the supporter who created the aggressive behaviour did not reappear. By the end of the project the two senior librarians were working together harmoniously in the same office, preparing the project report. I had tried to smooth the way by organising for the three of us to go to lunch together, but it is not clear how much this assisted the relationship. Personally, I did feel that I was able to avoid bias towards either library group.

### **Workshop 1**

**Monday 27 October 1992**

The agenda was developed on the same basis as Workshop 1 and 2 of the Corporate Services Review. We had compressed into one full day what had taken a half day and a full day for Case Study 1. This was an indication of the urgency of the Library Review, and the desire by the managers for it to catch up with the Corporate Services Review.

During Workshop 1 of the Library Review it became necessary to deviate from the agenda and debate “The outcomes we want from the review” in order to diffuse some of the confusion and questioning.

The Library participants had found little opportunity to prepare for the workshop given all the other political issues which had developed and taken their time. Balancing this confusion was a very clear focus on the workshop process from Glen Coffey, Neil Hunter and Les Cooper, as they had recently experienced the similar workshop in Case Study 1.

After Workshop 1 we did not develop any formal agendas, but simply decided at the end of each workshop what we would cover at the next. This approach seemed to suit the smaller size

of the group (only 6 or 7 participants) and the strong need to develop an informality, trust and team spirit amongst the participants. (In addition to the history of conflict between the library groups, there was no working relationship between the three managers and the librarians, apart from between the Law Librarian and Glen Coffey.) I believe the decision to abandon agendas after Workshop 1 is another example of the flexibility required from a facilitator.

#### Agenda: Workshop 1

##### Development of Questionnaires

8.30 - 9.30 ISSUES: Now and future:

eg Changes occurring in:  
Society, Courts, Judiciary,  
Legal Profession, Government,  
Crown Law Department  
Library Profession  
Workplace,  
Technology

9.30 - 10.00 ETHOS:

*[Which had been called Elements of a Preliminary Vision in Case Study 1]*

Your “ideal” view of Library Services:

Describe in one word:

What would it be like working here?  
What would Clients think about Library Services?  
What would be different?

10.00 - 10.30 CLIENT FOCUS

Who are our clients?  
Are their needs changing?

10.30 - 11.30 STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS

STRENGTHS:

What are we good at?

WEAKNESSES:

What could be improved?  
What could go wrong?

OPPORTUNITIES:

What are our greatest chances “to do great things”

**THREATS:**

What would be the outcome if things went wrong - if we didn't change?

**11.30 - 12.30 LIBRARY SERVICES' ROLE**  
(Think futures!)

Why do Library Services exist?  
(In order to .....)

What problem are we trying to address?

What constraints/limitations are there on our role?

**12.30 - 1.30 Lunch**

**1.30 - 3.00 KEY ACTIVITIES**

What Key Activities should Library Services carry out to achieve the role?

How do the Activities link together? (Model)

**3.00 - 3.50 Keywords to describe each activity**

**3.50 - 4.00 INFORMATION TO BE GATHERED FOR NEXT WORKSHOP**

**Workshop Content**

**Issues**

Structured brainstorming was again used to identify issues. I continued to use this technique throughout the first workshop and then found that I could manage group participation informally given the small number of participants, and that this was more appropriate to creating a good style of communication amongst a group which, at first, was not inclined to communicate with each other but to speak through the facilitator.

Thirty five issues were generated. The external issues closely mirrored those developed in Case Study 1, which was not surprising given that three of the participants were also members of Case Study 1. However, new internal issues emerged relating to libraries, both general and specific to this Review, i.e.

- Library Issues - General:
  - The increasing range of published material available.

- The consequences of not supplying effective Library services.
- The Government's review of library services.  
(This was an external project in which I was involved which was investigating how library services could be provided more effectively within State Government agencies. That is, the concern about the effectiveness of library services was wider than this review and CLD and Law Library librarians were uneasy about the outcome.)
- Image and profile of libraries in government.
- Preservation issues.
- Library Issues - Specific to this Review:
  - History of our library services.
  - Unclear levels of library service expectations.
  - Unclear levels of who provides which library services.
  - Accommodation and location of library facilities.
  - Development and maintenance of library standards - collections, staffing, service.
  - Issues of the Library "belonging" (i.e. being bonded with the organisation and part of the social interaction and shared values, which was particularly a concern for the CLD Libraries which tended to be isolated organisationally)
  - Willingness to change.

## Ethos

*I believed these questions resulted in some interesting revelations about culture, and especially where the librarians and non librarians (the three Corporate Services managers) in the Working Party had different views. These differences were quite deep-seated, and despite debate, the librarians and non librarians did not come closer in their understanding of each other's viewpoints. However, I believe these two camps, (ie librarians and non librarians), was a critical factor in bonding the librarians closer into a common understanding and a more harmonious working relationship.*

To complete the phrase "Ideally, library clients would say library service people are very ...", the following responses were generated:

Efficient, reliable, professional, supportive, helpful, invaluable, indispensable, courteous, approachable, personable, delighted, friendly, valued, responsive, knowledgeable, committed, motivated, effective.

The librarians felt the highest priority was to be seen to be efficient and effective.

The non librarians' highest priority was for librarians to be seen as invaluable.

The librarians noted that they could not be described as helpful because they did not have the staff available to achieve this.

The librarians therefore thought that the words which they needed to work hardest to achieve were "helpful" and "responsive" (ie if we had the resources we would have no problems.)

In contrast the non librarians thought most work was required to be “indispensable”.

To the phrase “Ideally library staff will think that library people are very ...” the following words were contributed:

Committed, cooperative, all working to a common purpose, supportive, professional, knowledgeable, approachable (use each other’s strengths, support each other’s weaknesses), sense of self worth, respected, effective, harmonious, excellent, and that the library environment will be stimulating, fun, challenging, rewarding, enjoyable.

Again, there was disagreement. The librarians strongly disagreed with the idea of being described as working in a fun environment. They believed that their clients would consider this to be most inappropriate. Whereas the concept of having fun in the working environment was central to the team spirit and camaraderie of Corporate Services.

From the above list the librarians decided that more work was required to be “knowledgeable”, “respected” and “have a sense of self worth”. The non librarians chose “effective”.

### **The Outcomes We Want from the Review**

This agenda item was introduced as it was apparent that there was no shared understanding. Twenty three items were generated. The librarians’ needs were in terms of having resourcing and staffing problems solved, eg:

- That we can finally go to our clients and say “What do you want” instead of “We can’t do it”.
- More resources, especially computing, and for those resources to be maintained.
- Some of our areas of neglect are addressed, eg Country, Children’s Court.
- A structure and environment which meets the needs of library staff, eg career paths, professional development, personal development.

The non librarians took a more structured view and their expectations related to the review achieving identification of client needs and the best way to achieve them, and hence there being no need for further reviews.

### **Client Focus**

As in Case Study 1 there was no difficulty in defining clients and key relationships. However, there was lack of certainty whether the library service should be catering for students, litigants and the general public. This was especially a concern because the mission of CLD was:

To ensure the courts and the government are able to provide the people of Western Australia with an independent, responsive and efficient system of justice where all are equal before the law.

The Working Party questioned how this could be achieved when CLD libraries were closed to litigants and the general public, and the Law Library only provided for these groups in an informal and ad hoc way since the library was not resourced to meet such needs.

### Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

*Despite my emphasis that identifying weaknesses was not laying blame but surfacing opportunities for improvement, I perceived there was reluctance for the librarians to admit their weaknesses to non librarians (or perhaps managers). While this barrier was eventually reduced through the workshop process, it never entirely disappeared. There was, however, a positive response to identifying strengths, which were seen as relating to expertise in law librarianship (which was considered a very specialised field and more complex than other areas of librarianship), library collections and client support. It was also stated as a strength that “we must be lateral thinkers to have survived”.*

Weaknesses, from the librarians’ perspective related to resource shortages, “problems in getting our message heard” (the lack of response from management to resource requests), and concern that Central Agencies do not appreciate the critical need for a good legal library service (and had withheld funding pending a review).

The non librarians introduced weaknesses relating to excessive duplication/under-utilisation of collection items (but not all the librarians agreed with this), lack of role clarity, lack of clarification of clients’ needs and priorities, the need to provide library services to all CLD programmes (eg there were no library services or collections for Corporate Services), and concern that the library service is not mainstream to the Department’s management.

There was agreement on opportunities and threats. The opportunity was to meet clients’ information needs, making clients more effective, and hence contributing to the more effective administration of justice across the State. I realised how easy this clarity had been to achieve, despite the differences in the Working Party. We, in effect, had the essence of a role statement and a Weltanschauung - and this had been so tortuous to achieve in the Corporate Services Review.

The threats were powerful, and quite specific to the environment, which I believed also demonstrated some degree of clarity of purpose, ie

#### Threats:

- Further diminished services, culminating in poorer decision-making across CLD.
- Further disadvantages for our lawyers versus private practice (ie the defence), in library collections, services and technology. (Some private law firms had advanced text management/retrieval technology and good library collections and services.)
- We will lose good quality lawyers.
- Potential loss of criminal and civil cases, which will have a high impact on the State, especially for large cases.
- Power brokers will protect their own resources; there will be no integration and higher cost for lower service. (This referred to the potential for client groups to not cooperate in sharing their library collections and services.)



## Role

At this stage we diffused the conflict about the role of each library service, and moved to a higher level of identifying the role for Information Services. This was in keeping with the emerging view of Information as a resource in the Corporate Services Review.

*I recognised that there was some expertise in defining role statements for resource areas amongst the three managers who were also members of the Corporate Services Review, but was still surprised at how quickly a role statement was agreed.*

The role of CLD information services is to improve administration of justice throughout the State by meeting the information needs of the Judiciary and the CLD.

This role is accomplished by CLD specialists in the management of Library, Records and Information Technology resources.

The role statement positioned information services strategically by linking to the corporate mission, encompassed the current scope of both library services (information needs of the Judiciary and CLD), and had a clear statement of how the role would be achieved, ie by having specialists with expertise in information management. It met Checkland's criteria for a Root Definition - "Do X by Y in order to achieve Z".

## Key Activities

The last item for this very intensive full day workshop was to develop a conceptual activity model. Again the work carried out in Case Study 1 assisted, and a preliminary model was developed using the Corporate Services generic model as a starting point. However, perhaps this was too readily accepted, and greater ownership may have resulted from a fresh start (although this will always be the issue when generic models are used, and especially where they have been developed by another group).

The core activities in the model evolved further in later workshops. I believed this evolution to be important to the emerging Weltanschauungen. The librarians were the major contributors to definition of the core activities of the first model, which depicts a traditional functional view of librarianship based on the following activities:

- Identify Library Resources Required
- Acquire and Manage Resources
- Organise the Collection
- Maintain the Collection
- Provide Specialist Services

By the second iteration of the model the Working Party together (and not just the librarians) were taking the view of the overall information resource, using the thinking about core activities which was emerging in Case Study 1, and changed the core activities to:

- Develop and implement information policy and standards
- Provide and access information resources
- Optimise information resources.

From the debate which underpinned the modelling I gained the impression that the librarians were beginning to recognise the advantages of being part of the Corporate Services information resource role, because this would give a sense of “belonging”, secure resources, provide career paths, and position the library services more strategically. Similarly, I believe the non librarians were gaining a better appreciation of librarianship as part of information resource management, and were keen to be at the leading edge by bringing together the planning, policy and standards for all types of information resources - IT, library, records.

This thinking is further developed in the gap analysis of the second model.

Figure 12:

### First Library Model

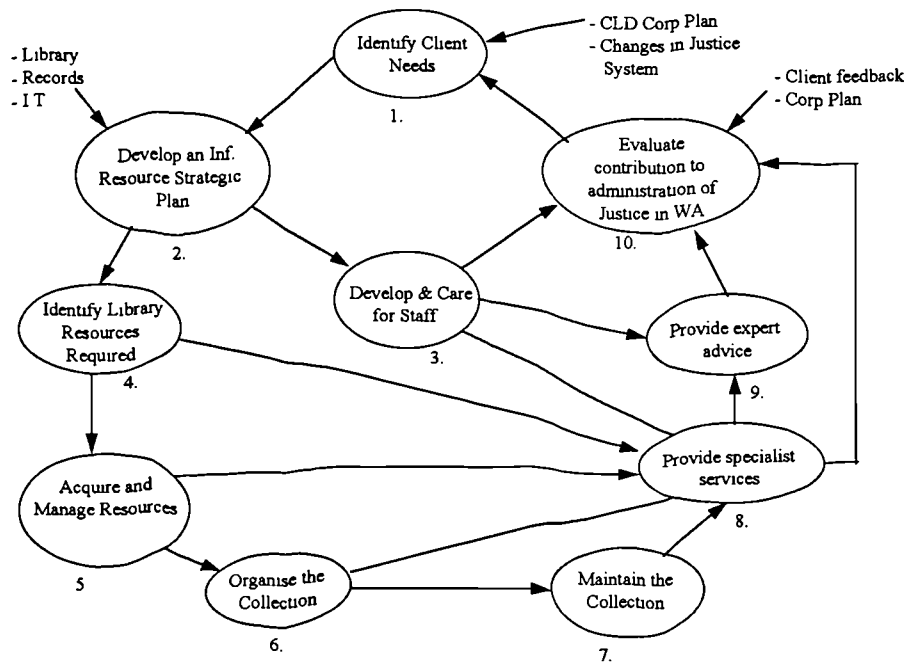
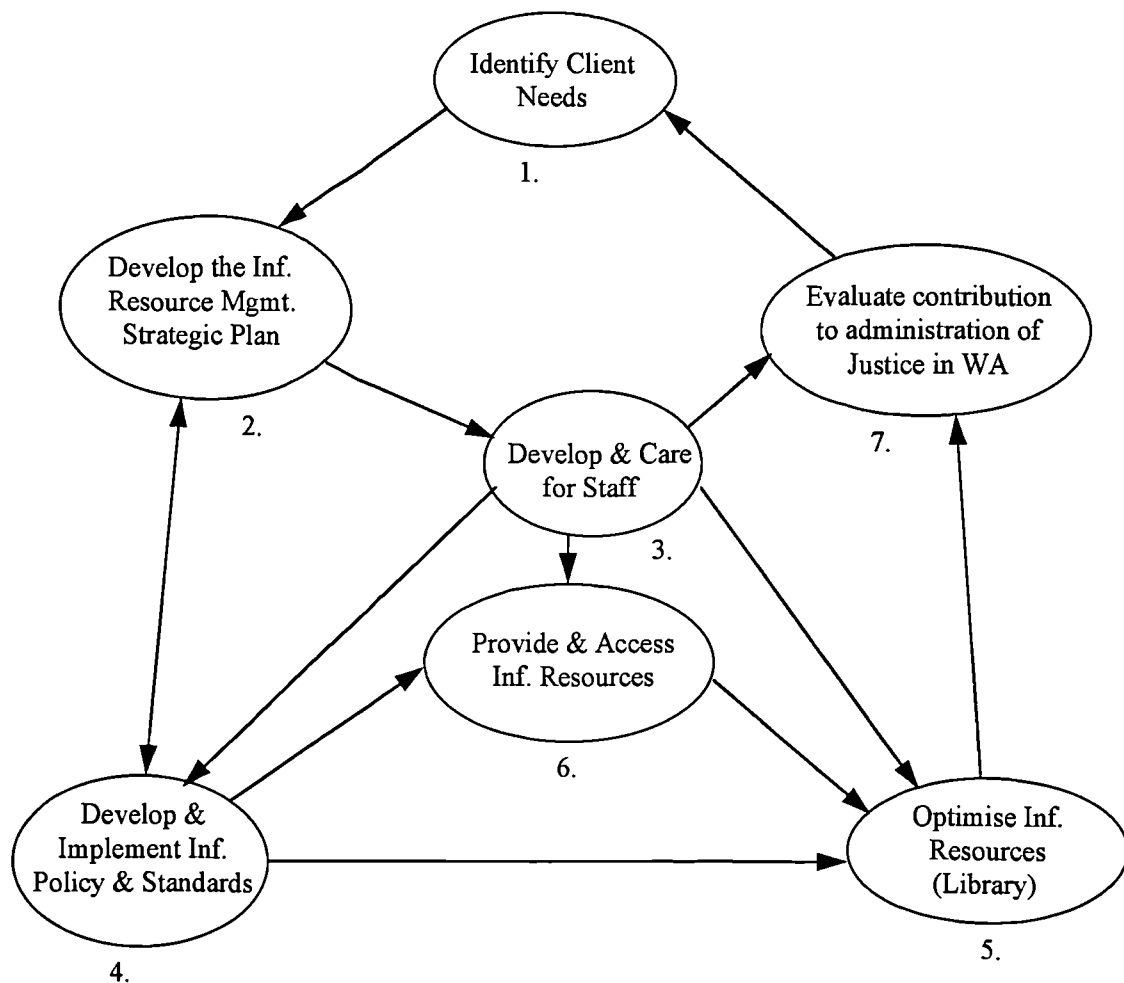


Figure 13:

### Revised Library Model



Without formal, timetabled agendas, we moved into a series of four more workshops. Increasing harmony and team spirit was evident as the workshops progressed. All participants seemed to be on a steep and challenging learning curve, and were enjoying the experience. The librarians were learning about the importance Corporate Services was now placing on strategic planning and accountability for resource optimisation, and the benefits this might bring them in terms of status and recognition in CLD and the courts. The non librarians were learning about librarianship from the perspective of information resource management, rather than librarianship as a collection of library books in the custody of librarians.

At these workshops two major lines of analysis were undertaken, and are discussed below:

1. The SSM type questioning of the activity model to understand gaps and decide organisational change strategies.
2. The analysis of the questionnaires and client interviews to arrive at specific decisions for library collections and services.

### **Analysis of the Activity Model**

The analysis of each activity in the conceptual model was based on the same questions as for the Case Study 1 resource workshops:

Why will we carry out this activity?  
 How will we carry out this activity?  
 Resource implications.

In SSM terms we were addressing gap analysis and decisions on action to be taken. I have provided a summary only to demonstrate the emerging thinking for each activity. More specific action steps were identified.

**Activity 1:**  
**Identify Client Needs**

This activity focused on supporting clients by identifying information needs and strategies, and having early and proactive involvement in new initiatives to ensure information needs are planned.

This would be achieved by involvement in clients' strategic planning processes, regular client liaison, nurturing of principal client contacts (information gatekeepers), and education of clients in the potential of the information resource. It was emphasised that this work required a coordinated approach across Corporate Services (ie the librarians were being positioned as part of a wider resource management team).

It was considered that skills were available to achieve this, but not the resources. (There was a greater confidence here in having the expertise to undertake this new, more formal, needs identification role, in comparison to Case Study 1. It seemed to me that the librarians were indicating that this was the role for which they had been educated, but which resource shortages had prevented being carried out.)

**Activity 2:**  
**Develop the Information Resource Management Strategic Plan**

This activity aimed to achieve a coordinated strategic planning process encompassing all information resources, with associated resource allocation and accountability.

It was to be achieved by developing strategies in partnership with other information groups, and with wider resource groups across Corporate Services. Cost justifying the information management programme was an integral part of this activity (in order to secure the required budget and staffing).

As with Case Study 1, it was recognised that this was a new activity and there were implications for skills to be developed, resources to be provided, and new roles to be defined for senior library staff.

**Activity 3:**  
**Develop and Care for Staff**

From a functional perspective the reason for this activity was described as having the right people available, working in a structure which enables us to achieve the strategic plan. However, there was also a softer, more people-oriented view that the activity aimed to achieve staff who are happy, motivated and caring, where achievement is recognised and rewarded, and where there are staff development and career opportunities.

This would be achieved by a range of human resource management initiatives, including having a specific strategy to make sure everyone understands our ethos of a happy, caring and motivated team. (This thinking was strongly reinforced by Neil

Hunter, who had brought this viewpoint to Corporate Services HR, in his role as HR Manager.)

Again it was recognised that this was a new focus requiring skill development and resourcing.

#### **Activity 4:**

##### **Develop and Implement Information Policy & Standards**

A strong belief in policy and standards came from Glen Coffey and Les Cooper, who had successfully taken this approach in their role when each in turn was IT Manager for CLD.

For the library, focus on policy and standards was clarified to include collection development and sharing, service delivery, security, confidentiality, privacy, freedom of information, cataloguing and indexing, preservation, archives, disposal, storage, staffing ratios, equipment, budgeting and purchasing.

It was agreed that the activity aimed to achieve consistency and coordination of the Department's information resources, which would optimise cost effectiveness of the information resource and achieve maximum information sharing. (The idea of sharing across library groups was new for the CLD environment and, I believed, showed changing Weltanschauungen.)

It would be achieved by a formal process of policy development and implementation, with input from external standards, legislation and CLD strategic plans. It would be a joint initiative across information resource management and corporate services, as appropriate, with participation from staff and clients.

There would be a need to develop skills and resources.

#### **Activity 5:**

##### **Provide and Access Information Resources**

This activity exists *to make the information available to meet clients' needs, in the most cost effective and timely manner.*

The way it would be achieved showed some significant changes. On the part of the librarians there would be a wider knowledge of external information sources (law and non law) and of internal sources (across all libraries and other information resource areas).

There would be overall coordination and cooperation for the total library service to provide maximum flexibility in staffing and expertise. This coordination would include selection, acquisition and provision of library items.

There would be implications for skills development and deployment of resources.

## **Activity 6:**

### **Optimise Information Resources**

The aim is to get the best from the investment in information, improve effectiveness of our clients, improve our job satisfaction, and remain competitive.

From an organisational learning perspective, this would be achieved by constantly challenging the way we provide the service, and sharing/integrating expertise across information resource areas to achieve an holistic approach. There would also be a need to optimise relationships with the information industry, communicate and educate within CLD on the role of information, and develop specific information services such as current awareness, SDI (selective dissemination of information), and information directories.

Again there were skill and resourcing implications.

## **Activity 7:**

### **Evaluate Contribution to the Administration of Justice in WA**

This is critical to justify our activities, ensure we are providing the right information and services, ensure the information is used and our client needs are met, and to demonstrate accountability within CLD and to the government.

This would be achieved by regular formal meetings with clients and the libraries' own management to review the Information Resource Management strategic plan; by publishing and promotion of our contribution; and by review of cost benefits achieved.

For this activity we also posed the question "How will we know if we are successful", and decided the criteria would be demand, client satisfaction, meeting the strategic plan, and effective reporting criteria.

*As with Case Study 1, I believed the Library Review had moved to a more strategic focus, more closely aligned with the Department's core tasks in the administration of justice. Like Case Study 1, they had also realised that they belonged to a wider resource management team, and that success could only be achieved by coordination across that team. I may have been overly optimistic, but it seemed to me that the issue of sharing across libraries had become a lesser problem in comparison to the opportunities of the bigger vision.*

## **Analysis of Questionnaires and Interviews**

Concurrent with the workshops the senior librarians had undertaken client interviews based on structured questions, and had administered a questionnaire to other clients, with the aim of determining needs and priorities for library collections and services.

The specifics of library collection requirements were analysed by the senior librarians outside the workshops. They worked together to identify and cost areas where duplication could be overcome, opportunities for sharing to improve access, and collection gaps.

In the workshops we took an holistic view of all the common service requirements (ie processes required for all library services), and developed strategies to optimise service delivery.

The common service requirements were:

- Book selection and collection development policy
- Selection within policy, and acquisitions
- Processing (receiving, labelling, etc)
- Cataloguing and indexing
- Maintaining up-to-date legislation, and master indexes
- Serials management
- Binding and preservation
- Reference and information services
- Reader education
- Circuits, country locations (11)
- Processing and Technical/Administrative Support

Each was analysed in detail and decisions made to streamline the tasks across all library services, using improved information system support wherever possible. Opportunities to devolve (to Programme and Court support staff) or contract out some processing tasks to free resources for more strategic roles were also debated.

From this evolved the decision to identify client groups and provide small library teams at client locations. There were five client groups:

1. Supreme Court
2. District Court
3. Magistrates Courts
4. Children's Court, Family Court, Public Guardian
5. CLD Head Office

These teams would be linked to wider information resource teams encompassing IT and Records. Each library team would have a team leader. The teams would carry out information needs analysis, information services (reference, research, SDI, current awareness), selection, cataloguing, training, serials management, and binding decisions, for their client site. The aim was that by this means duplication and barriers between CLD Library and the Law Library would disappear.

The Supreme Court team leader would also coordinate policy and budget for Barristers Board clients.

Supporting the teams there would be two central activities:

Professional:	Strategic planning Policy and standards IT planning Development of manuals Budgeting Training infrastructure
Support:	Acquisitions, orders, accounts Binding

The Library Services' role would be part of the new structure of Corporate Services, and would fit within the information resource area.

As part of these workshops, fourteen projects were also identified and prioritised, pulling together the gap analysis of the activity model. These were one-off projects required to move to the new direction and they would need to be resourced separately to the ongoing management of the library information resource. The priority one projects were:

- Determine size and extent of cataloguing backlog and organise a short term contract.
- Investigate sharing of inhouse indexing of judgments where commercial indexing is not available or is not cost effective.
- Renegotiate discount arrangements with all publishers.
- Review overall requirements and options for managing statutes (WA and Commonwealth); develop strategy with IT for the medium term as well as the long term; evaluate using contract staff in the interim.
- Stocktake Chambers collections.

*I felt that the barriers and conflicts of the past were breaking down, and that there was enthusiasm for the new vision on the part of all the Working Party participants. I also believed that there had been a significant change in Weltanschauungen on the part of the librarians; however, this was not validated in their post-project questionnaire responses. (See Chapter 6.)*

The next steps were for the librarians to work with Neil Hunter to develop organisational structure, roles, responsibilities, job descriptions and classifications, consistent with the work being carried out for Case Study 1. The two senior librarians would work together to develop the budget requirements, write the final report and review this with client groups. The January deadline was extended into February.



## **EVENTS AFTER THE REVIEW**

As with Case Study 1, just as the final report was being written there was a change of government and the amalgamation of CLD into the Ministry of Justice. This brought a new set of library services and librarians into the boundary from the former Correction Services Department. The decision was made to halt the completion of the review report for the time being.

Again, the feedback from CLD senior librarians was that the process of the CLD Review of Library Services had given them skills, confidence and a position of strength to take a proactive and leadership role in the new Ministry, despite the initial upsets and uncertainties of the new environment. They expressed that they had approached the CLD Review of Library Services with trepidation and emerged from it with strength.

## **APPENDIX 6**

### **ANALYSIS OF CASE STUDY QUESTIONNAIRES**

This appendix provides the detailed analysis of the questionnaire which was used to identify the sponsor and participants' views of changes in Weltanschauung and contributing factors. My personal comments are included.

In using the questionnaire we were embarking on a learning experience to understand more about methodology, and what specifically had worked well for CLD. The aim was for the organisation to apply this learning to future studies, and in that way the organisation's use of methodology would evolve. This approach is integral to the action research approach used for the evolution of SSM itself (eg as described in Atkinson, 1988).

The questionnaire content, as shown below, was developed in conjunction with CLD Managers, Glen Coffey, Neil Hunter and Les Cooper, and they were most interested to learn from the questionnaire results. Des Klass, lecturer in quantitative methods at Curtin University, also assisted in the structure of the questionnaire.

The Corporate Services questionnaires were circulated and completed at the final meeting of Case Study 1 on 5 January 1993. There was no debate between participants in completing the questionnaires.

All Working Party participants from Case Study 1 completed the questionnaire, although all did not complete every question. There were 21 questionnaire responses, although there were only 17 participants in the Working Party, and this reflects a few instances where a participant was on leave and a colleague attended some of the workshops. This was usually the reason for some questions not being answered, ie the respondent did not participate in that segment of the project.

At the time of completing the questionnaires the SSM analysis for Case Study 1 was completed, and most of the analysis to determine organisation structure was finished, but the final reports had not been written.

In the questionnaire for the Library Review participants the words Corporate Services were substituted with Library Services, and minor changes were made where the process was slightly different (eg client interviews and questionnaires for Case Study 2, rather than client interviews and workshops for Case Study 1).

On 5 January 1993 Neil Hunter offered to circulate the Library Review questionnaire to the librarians. Thus questionnaires were completed in the librarians' own time (and not in a meeting as with Case Study 1) and the librarians may have discussed their responses. In addition, the questionnaires arrived with the librarians at a time when they were under a great deal of pressure to complete the review report and budget. It was therefore some weeks before the library questionnaires were returned to me, the final one arriving from the Law Library senior librarian on 20th April (after the amalgamation into the Ministry of Justice), and she identified herself by signing the questionnaire. These factors may have influenced the answers on the library questionnaires.

The Corporate Services questionnaire is presented below and I have added notes to explain the reasons for the questions, as appropriate.

### ***CORPORATE SERVICES REVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE***

*We are interested to learn from the way we conducted the Corporate Services Review and would appreciate your time in filling in the following confidential questionnaire.*

*We wish responses to be anonymous, so please do not enter your name or signature on the questionnaire.*

*All members of the Working Party are being asked to complete the questionnaire. A summary of responses will be made available to the Working Party.*

1. *Please state **in your own words** what you believe was the **ROLE** of Corporate Services immediately before the Review.*

I added this question for the participants to reflect on what they now thought the starting point had been. In fact Corporate Services as an entity did not have an identity for most participants before the review, rather they related to their individual branches. In an attempt to validate these responses I compared them with the answers to the question of the reason for the branch existing which I posed in the pre-workshop meetings, although a one-to-one comparison was not possible because the questionnaires were anonymous.

2. *Please state **in your own words** what you believe is the new **ROLE** of Corporate Services, i.e. after the Review.*

I asked them to use their own words, rather than look up their files to find the role statement which was agreed in the last workshop, as I believed their own choice of words would be more illustrative. However, they may have responded with the official version if they happened to have memorised it.

3. *Do you believe the new Role is the correct Role for Corporate Services?*

*YES                      NO    (Please circle)*

*Any comments?*

I wanted to know whether they truly agreed with the new role, or whether they disagreed but had decided not to voice this in the workshop. In this way I was trying to explore, to some extent, the concern of the proponents of Critical Systems Thinking (eg Jackson 1982, Rosenhead 1984) that inequalities in power and resources amongst participants prevent genuine discussion and agreement.

4. *We want to understand what you believe to be the factors which most contributed to the development of the new Role.*

*Please rate the factors below as follows:*

- 1 *Critically important factor, key to the development of the new Role.*
- 2 *Useful, but not critical. We may have arrived at the new Role without this factor.*
- 3 *Irrelevant. This factor had no impact in terms of helping us develop a new Role.*
- 4 *Negative impact. This factor made it more difficult for us to develop a new Role.*

*There is no limit to the number of factors which may be rated as a 1, 2 3 or 4.*

*Any further comments you would like to make would be appreciated.*

These questions aimed to encompass all the steps in the project (whether or not they were SSM phases), as well as other factors considered important to organisational change as identified in the literature, eg the role of the facilitator and management leadership.

	<i>Factors</i>	<i>Rating</i>
a)	<i>PERSONAL INTERVIEWS with the FACILITATOR before the workshops began</i>	....
b)	<i>The explanation of the PURPOSE and OBJECTIVES of the Review</i>	....
c)	<i>Use of WORKSHOPS as the basis for participation and discussion</i>	....
d)	<i>The role of the FACILITATOR</i>	....
e)	<i>Leadership and involvement of SENIOR MANAGEMENT from CORPORATE SERVICES</i>	....
f)	<i>Enabling ALL CORPORATE SERVICES staff to provide input to the workshops</i>	....
g)	<i>Identification of ISSUES affecting the future of CORPORATE SERVICES</i>	....

- h) Discussion of *PRELIMINARY VISION*, ie  
Your “ideal” view of Corporate Services ....  
- What would it be like working here?  
- What would Clients think about us?  
- What would be different?
- i) Identification of *STRENGTHS*,  
*WEAKNESSES*, *OPPORTUNITIES*,  
*THREATS* ....
- j) Input from *CLIENTS*  
- Internal ....  
- External ....
- k) Use of Models of *KEY ACTIVITIES*  
(Bubble Diagrams) to discuss *WHY* we  
should carry out the activity, *HOW*,  
and *RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS* ....
- l) Learning more about other *CORPORATE*  
*SERVICES BRANCHES* during the Review ....
- This question was added by the Corporate Services Managers.  
I would have missed it, but they considered it had been important.
- m) Working with colleagues to develop the  
new *ORGANISATION STRUCTURE* ....
- n) *OTHER*. (Please add and rate any  
further factors you believe should  
be included in the above list)

***ANY OTHER COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE ABOUT THE REVIEW?***

*Thank you for your participation.*

**Questionnaire Analysis**

The managers who were common to both Working Parties completed only the Corporate Services questionnaire.

*In hindsight this was a mistake, but at the time I did not want to stretch their goodwill by asking them to complete two questionnaires. However, I should at least have asked for the library role questions to be completed by the managers.*

I have provided the full content of all the comments received on the questionnaires, as I believe this is where the richest feedback occurred. However, they may introduce some bias as it is usually the Rating 1 responses where comments are provided.

Some of the comments indicate that the respondents may have been ranking the success factors for the overall review, rather than the factors which contributed to a changed role (Weltanschauung), despite the fact that I emphasised this point when I handed out the questionnaires. This may have implications for my research themes.

The project sponsor, Glen Coffey, voluntarily took the step of identifying his questionnaire, and this enabled me to extract his ratings and comments in the analysis below.

### CASE STUDY 1, CORPORATE SERVICES REVIEW:

#### Questions 1 & 2

#### Role of Corporate Services, before and after the Review

##### Facilitator's View:

Before the review Corporate Services provided services in response to client requests, and these were mostly of a processing or advice nature.

After the review Corporate Services has taken a strategic responsibility to optimise the Department's resources in order to improve the administration of justice in Western Australia.

##### Sponsor's View

Before:

"To optimise the provision and management of the Department's resources."

After:

"To improve the administration of justice through strategies to optimise the acquisition and management of the Department's resources".

##### Participants' Views

*In analysing the questionnaire responses I realised that the participants had different starting points in relation to their understanding of Corporate Services' role before the review. This affected any shift in Weltanschauungen which occurred. For example, only one participant (in addition to Glen) stated that before the review the role was to optimise resources. This participant then had an after view which added a more strategic focus to the optimise role. In contrast, other participants moved from service delivery (pre review) to optimisation (post review).*

I decided that to meet the criterion of participants describing a change in Weltanschauungen which was close to the view of the facilitator and sponsor the answers should move from a less strategic role to a more strategic role, usually in the form of "provide service or support" (before) to a more proactive role such as "optimising resources to meet Departmental or client objectives" (after).

There were 9 participant responses which fully met this criterion, and these are provided below in the participants' own words:

1. Before  
“To optimise the use of Departmental resources and to provide some Executive services.”  
  
After  
“To acquire and optimise the use of resources in the provision of services according to the Departmental objectives.”
2. Before  
“To support other areas of the Department in order that they achieve their own goals and targets.”  
  
After  
“As above, but in addition, to be much more proactive, to develop strategic plans for the Department, and to work closer with other programmes. The focus is more on partnerships and future direction.”
3. Before  
“To provide an essential central service for the Program Areas and Sub Departments, eg Finance, IT etc.”  
  
After  
“To ensure the essential services required by the Department to operate effectively are effectively provided and optimised to improve the Justice system in WA”
4. Before  
“To provide support services to the Department.”  
  
After  
“Optimise resource management services to the Department, i.e. Theme of ‘right resources in the right place at the right time’.”
5. Before  
“To help with the administration of CLD.”  
  
After  
“To be proactive in ensuring our clients meet their objectives in an effective and efficient way - to make a difference through our professionalism and specific expertise.”
6. Before  
“Service and resource provider to clients on a day to day basis (ie reactive approach).”  
  
After  
“Above, plus now a more planned approach (proactive) to meet current and future needs of clients. Greater emphasis on providing expert advice and understanding and meeting the clients’ needs.”

7. Before  
“To provide services to the other areas of the Department (ie Courts etc) so they can perform their roles.”  
  
After  
“To coordinate and optimise the Department’s resources and/or facilitate proactively this coordination/optimisation with the programs concerned to fulfil the role and objectives of the Crown Law Department.”
8. Before  
“To support the work of the Department.”  
  
After  
“To support the work of the Department but in a more strategic, proactive way and as a cohesive unit.”
9. Before  
“Administrative support for the CLD as a whole.”  
  
After  
“As above, but with more emphasis on client service and proactive service to these clients.”

A further group of 7 participants saw the role being extended to meeting client needs in a closer relationship with clients. These 7 were near the view of the facilitator and sponsor, but had not taken such a strategic perspective:

1. Before  
“To provide an efficient and effective accounting service. To provide a budget service.”  
  
After  
“To meet the requirements of our clients. This was identified as providing the current services and some additional roles.”
2. Before  
“Provide systems, services and support to our clients.”  
  
After  
“Still to provide systems and support, but provide structure to get close to our clients to better understand their requirements, providing better service - total support.”
3. Before  
“To provide a service to clients.”  
  
After  
“To assist in the achievement of Departmental objectives.”



4. Before  
“Corporate Services role was to provide services to clients that they needed but were not in a position to adequately provide themselves. These services were mainly determined by Corporate Services with program input.”
- After  
“The new role is the same though greater emphasis has been placed on the clients to determine their needs. The Corporate Services should be more able to provide services in a more timely manner.”
5. Before  
“In general, to provide an efficient service to our clients in helping them meet their needs.”
- After  
“As above, however, with a greater understanding of what services we should be providing and to whom, as well as why.
- In general, I don’t see our role as very different prior to the review as much as how we will go about implementing our role and this seems to have come out more rather than a change in roles.”
6. Before  
“To provide an administrative and support unit for branches around the Department.”
- After  
“To provide supportive and meaningful service to all clients both internal and external to the Department.”
7. Before  
“To provide an accounting service. (Collection of revenue and payment of expenditure).”
- After  
“To provide not only an accounting service, but financial advice, support and expertise.”

A third group of 4 participants did not believe the role had changed, or had only changed by adding another function to the scope:

1. Before  
“To provide financial, HR, IT/info and admin services to the CLD.”
- After  
“To the above add asset services.”
2. Before  
“Providing specialist and professional services to other areas of Crown Law and the general public.”

After

"Fundamentally the same as 1, however, the review has highlighted several inefficiencies in the way Corporate Services operate."

*This raises the question whether the changed Weltanschauungen are more related to "how" things are done, rather than to "what" is done. This view of the "how" was also touched on in the sponsor's answer to question 3. However, in terms of change in Weltanschauungen being an indication of cultural change, the change in "how" could also indicate a change in cultural values. I realised that I had framed the questionnaire (perhaps incorrectly) exclusively in terms of a new role, and not allowing for a new interpretation of the existing role. These aspects of cultural change are further explored in chapter 9.*

3. Before

"To provide effective and sufficient support to programs to enable them to effectively achieve their objectives."

After

"Same as above. (Don't know exactly what role statement was agreed to.)"

4. Before

"Provide efficient, cost effective services to clients in their needs for finance, assets, H.R., information, I.T., library services."

After

"As above".

*Responses 3 and 4 above are interesting in that the "before" view is quite close to the facilitator and sponsor's "after" view. This raises the question whether the perception of "before" view had been affected by the process of the review, or whether there had in fact been no change. I was not able to match this one-to-one with the "before" views expressed in pre-workshop meetings because the questionnaires were anonymous. However, the same question is raised by all responses to "before" and "after" Weltanschauungen in the Library Services Review (see below).*

My interpretation of the questionnaire responses was:

- Facilitator and sponsor had essentially the same final Weltanschauung.
- 9 participants also had this view. (45%)
- 7 participants were quite close to the view, but had missed some essential element. (35%)
- 4 participants had not perceived a change in Weltanschauung. (20%)

In comparing the "before" understanding of role as expressed in the questionnaires, with the comments made in pre-workshop meetings, there was consistency, since the words used in the pre-meetings had reflected a reactive role in providing support or services.

### Question 3

Do you believe the new Role is the correct Role for Corporate Services?

One person did not reply.

One person was unsure.

One person answered No.

The reason for answering No, was given as:

“I believe that more emphasis should be placed in allowing clients to take some of the more mundane tasks away from Corporate Services especially in the information technology areas.”

I concluded that the “No” response was a misunderstanding since devolving process type tasks was integral to the strategy of taking a more strategic focus. However, there was a concern that the respondent had not realised this.

The other comments made are, in many cases, a further indication of the changed Weltanschauungen:

- “So as to be accountable.”
- “I feel that the separation of Exec Services and Corp Services is now correct.”
- “Getting away from just a ‘service’ oriented role and being more proactive.”
- “It is clear to most people, I think, that Corporate Services really does have a vital part to play through the stated role.”
- “Given that Program Managers main concerns in the past have mostly revolved around their resources, I believe the new role is most appropriate.”
- “The change in view is from being a service provider to being an essential integral part of the Department to improve the Justice System.”

### Sponsor’s Response

“Yes.

Similar role statement to current with significantly increased understanding of what is required to undertake role and how it should be achieved, ie planning, co-ordination, proactive approach and making a difference. The philosophy of operation is also better understood as highlighted in the motto, ‘Right resources, right place, right time’.”

### Question 4, Factors which most contributed to the development of the new Role

#### Facilitator’s View

I believed that the pre-workshop interviews, workshop environment, the role of the facilitator, leadership and involvement of senior management, and use of models had been the key factors in achieving changes in Weltanschauungen.

### Sponsor's View

Glen had indicated informally that the workshop environment, the facilitator, and the models had been the key factors. However, on completing his questionnaire he rated every factor as "1" (critically important) and gave detailed comments why. (See below)

### Participants' Responses

	Rating	No.
a) PERSONAL INTERVIEWS with the FACILITATOR before the workshops began	1	7
	2	9
	3	4
	4	0

With only 7 or 35% seeing this as critical, I realised that I rated this step more highly than the participants. I believe it is critical because of my experiences with workshops where there has not been the opportunity for pre-meetings (ie less empathy, more negative responses, slower to interact), but the participants would not have had this comparison as the basis for their evaluation. This is shown by the comment of the people who rated 3:

- "Only gave the facilitator an idea of the various roles."
- "It was good to meet the facilitator but could not see any relevance."

In contrast, 1 rating comments were:

- "Getting to know the facilitator beforehand increased confidence and understanding in the process to be followed."
- "Forced us to attempt to understand and perhaps document our current role and vision."
- "Very important to obtain the views and attitudes of individuals."
- "Critical for understanding of review Coordinator and also for participants understanding of process."
- "Good understanding as to what was going to be achieved and to get to know each other."

The 2 rating comments were:

- "Probably more important for the facilitator than the interviewee."
- "Not everyone would have been frank - confidentiality could have been questioned."
- "It should not be critical. It may have helped the process to develop more quickly."

### Sponsor's Response

Rating: 1

"Enables initial understanding of issues/problems for each area. Establishes positive relationship with participants, highlighting empathy and willingness to listen. To demonstrate support, interest and care."

b)	The explanation of the PURPOSE and OBJECTIVES of the Review	1	15
		2	5
		3	0
		4	0

This was carried out in interviews, at the launch, at the first workshop, and by circulating the project plan document. I had taken this step as automatic/administrative, but 75% participants rated it as critical, which is a reminder to ensure this step is carried out in all projects. This point is not always highlighted in the SSM literature. I believe a review can have clear objectives even through the problem is "messy" and the nature of the outcomes is unknown.

Rating 1 Comments:

- "To have a clear understanding of what was required."
- "Became clearer as the review progressed."
- "Work out approach and direction of review."
- "Otherwise why do it?"
- "Without an understanding of the above, the review could never succeed."
- "People needed to be well aware of their role in the process and the direction in which it was to head."
- "Without this we could not know what was the expected outcome and perhaps be suspicious."

### Sponsor's Response

Rating: 1

"Common view established of the outcome of the review by understanding why review undertaken and what is intended to be achieved. Helps define scope and boundary. Concentrates attention on the factors within scope of review."

c)	Use of WORKSHOPS as the basis for participation and discussion	1	13
		2	6
		3	0
		4	1

Only 68% of respondents thought the workshops were critical. I would have expected a higher response.

No comment was given on the 4 rating. However, there was a comment added at the end of the questionnaire, expressing the view that having different branches participating together bogged down the workshop process.

Rating 1 comments:

- “These instigated a cross pollination of ideas, a closer understanding of people and functions, and increased trust people had in the process.”
- “This certainly encouraged participation and enhanced the richness of the process.”
- “Greater involvement and varying ideas.”
- “Ideas from other areas pooled - common theme.”
- “The workshops were a bit slow sometimes (ie getting ideas onto whiteboard).”
- “The more involvement the better.”

Rating 2 comment:

“The opportunity to interact and contribute - very important. The time factor and sometimes repetition was a minus.”

The comments about the process being rather slow and repetitive, I believe were as a result of the high number of participants in the workshops.

### Sponsor's Response

Rating: 1

“Significantly different approach to previous reviews with undoubtedly improved results. Participants contribute, share and take ownership of the problem and the final solutions. Assists in breaking down barriers and building bridges, and enforces equality of performance - all peers.”

d)	The role of the FACILITATOR	1	15
		2	5
		3	0
		4	0

75% regarded this as critical. No-one regarded the factor as irrelevant or negative.

Five comments were made that it was important that the facilitator had been neutral, unbiased, and with no vested interest, although one comment questioned whether the facilitator had been leading the direction.

#### Rating 1 Comments:

- “It was important to have a neutral party (not influenced).”
- “Role of mediator between Branch and senior management was crucial to success.”
- “Needed someone very good to steer the ship.”
- “Unbiased ‘time-keeper, recorder’ allowed a non-personal development of the review.”
- “Focussing direction (sometimes perhaps leading?)”
- “Clearly without the facilitator the amount of participation and data obtained would not have resulted.”
- “Independent views and the fact that no preconceived views were held. I felt that a major plus was the fact that the facilitator was independent and held no vested interest in any particular job.”
- “Most critical to have the right person. No vested interest and extremely experienced and effective in this role, and experienced in business principles.”

#### Rating 2 Comment:

“Could have been derived from internal sources.”

#### Sponsor’s Response

##### Rating: 1

“Critical to the success of the review. Equally important is the style, approach, method of operation, personality, attitude, commitment, care and skills of the facilitator. Liz = 10 out of 10.”

e)	Leadership and involvement of SENIOR MANAGEMENT	1	18
		2	3
		3	0
		4	0

Despite my rule that there should be no rank evident in workshops, the leadership role had emerged and been regarded as important, as indicated by 86% rating this as critical. A number of comments were made regarding the commitment which this demonstrated. Isolated comments referred to a tendency for senior management to dominate or lead discussion, which I had tried to overcome and had not thought was a serious problem (in comparison to other organisations’ workshops which I have facilitated).

*I believe that in most cases where the senior managers may have appeared to be leading, they were supporting my push for more lateral thinking by challenging accepted viewpoints.*

Rating 1 comments:

- “To know what they expected.”
- “Good for bringing down any barriers (us and then mentality).”
- “Sometimes appeared to over rule decision made by groups.”
- “Experience and to a lesser degree - guidance.”
- “Since not all staff are fully aware of client needs, structures, procedures, etc.”
- “I would like to think that senior management involvement encouraged active participation and focus for the review.”
- “Indicated the level of commitment by the Department.”
- “Both the leadership and involvement showed commitment and willingness to listen and take notice of all views.”

Rating 2 comment:

“Tended to dominate discussions and lead facilitator”

#### Sponsor’s Response

Rating: 1

“Vital and critical to ensure commitment and ownership. Balance between leading and pushing difficult to achieve. Important to provide role model and allow formulation of correct participation and perception of the role of senior management.”

f)	Enabling ALL CORPORATE SERVICES staff to provide input to the workshops	1	14
		2	6
		3	1
		4	0

Opportunities to participate were obviously appreciated with a 66% response of critical. In hindsight I would have liked to know how the staff who were not Working Party members would have rated this question, but this was not part of the research design.

Rating 1 comments:

- “Extremely important to acceptance and future success.”
- “Gained wider acceptance. Some staff could more easily approach elected reps rather than senior staff.”



- “However very much dependent on the lack of bias shown by the intermediary - can become totally negative” (Rating 1 or 4)
- “Allowing all people involved to help to make the decisions, at all levels.”
- “This could have been done better with a wider range of levels on the Working Party. 90% were males and 95% were level 4 and above.”

Rating 2 comments:

- “In theory we may have achieved the same outcome in terms of concept, but in reality “1” would be a better response because wide staff participation can only but increase success levels.”
- “The lower level officers had little to contribute in some cases.”

#### Sponsor’s Response

Rating: 1

Those at workshops generally contributed well and used the opportunity provided. I feel at times the information/results from workshops differed from the information fed back to the balance of staff. This feedback was perhaps coloured slightly to reflect the personal views of the workshop participant. In that sense all staff may not be contributing equally. Difficult to address.

*Facilitator’s note:*

*This probably related especially to one Working Party participant who was constantly challenging the progress of the review and made the allegation that a conspiracy had happened at lunch time on Workshop 3 when the concept of the Information Resource had been conceived. On one or two occasions concerns and confusions were expressed outside the workshops by staff in his section, and separate meetings were convened with these personnel and the appropriate manager to address the confusion.*

g)	Identification of ISSUES affecting the future of Corporate Services	1	19
		2	1
		3	0
		4	0

With a 95% critical response, this rated more highly than I had expected. Perhaps it related to the number of times throughout the review that we returned to cross-check our direction against the issues. However, this is not a step which is commonly documented as an SSM technique (although I recognise that SSM is a meta-methodology and open to other techniques being included).

Rating 1 comments:

- “Made people aware of the number of issues and that similar problems were faced across Corporate Services.”

- “We needed this to help shape our thoughts.”
- “Future vision is critical to long term success”. *(Probably a reference to the futures focus I encouraged in identifying issues.)*
- “To have all areas input so as to create a stronger union (department).”
- “Very important.”
- “Helping towards deciding the direction branches needed to take, eg structure and client relations development.”

#### Sponsor’s Response

Rating: 1

“Need to clearly understand and develop strategies to address those issues impacting on Corporate Services, and thus preventing the effective undertaking of the role.”

h)	Discussion of PRELIMINARY VISION, ie	1	9	
	Your “ideal” view of Corporate Services		2	10
	- What would it be like working here?	3	2	
	- What would Clients think about us?	4	0	
	- What would be different?			

*This had been something of an experiment on my part to achieve sharing of values, and I believe I misnamed it as “vision”. It did not rate highly, with only 43% perceiving this to be critical. This may relate to culture within our organisations which does not encourage the sharing of these types of values.*

Rating 1 comments:

- “So as to highlight all contributing factors.”
- “Good for all staff to consider the best possible view.”
- “To identify the vision was most important.”

Rating 2 comment:

- “I am not sure in the early stages if this was as critical as other factors. Nonetheless it was important.”
- “Gave an opportunity for individuals to offer their ultimate goals.”

### Sponsor's Response

Rating: 1

"I feel probably the most important area and the most difficult to achieve. Still requires a lot of work although significant progress made."

*I feel now that a wider discussion of each participant's vision for the future would have been useful, say mid-way through the project, and an item we could have referred to at the end. Neil Hunter drafted the Review's final report and he and Glen developed a comprehensive vision statement at this stage, but as such it did not have the same degree of ownership of the participants as if it had been developed in the workshops.*

i)	Identification of STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS (SWOT)	1	17
		2	3
		3	0
		4	0

85% found this critical.

Rating 1 comments:

- "So as not to miss any little or big areas that needed addressing."
- "Essential to help us develop our structures/services."

Rating 2 comment:

- "Essential component of any planning process."

### Sponsor's Response

Rating: 1

"Vital to honestly articulate, understand and appreciate the above factors. Strategies can then be developed to enhance, overcome and/or address those issues identified."

j)	Input from CLIENTS		
	- Internal		
		1	15
		2	4
		3	0
		4	0
	- External		
		1	11
		2	5
		3	1
		4	0

There may have been difficulty in assessing this question as most participants only experienced the results second hand (ie they were not at the workshops or interviews). Nevertheless 79% thought input from internal clients was critical, and this probably reflects the pre-review client service culture, which was further developed into strategic relationships during the review.

Rating 1 comments:

- “So as to not have your head in the sand and let all users external and internal contribute.”
- “This formed the basis of our thinking. Without this the review would not have met our clients’ requirements.”
- “Most important to understand their view of current services, their requirements, and set strategies to improve and meet their needs.”

Rating 2 comment:

- “Identify our own needs. Identify the needs and requirements both future and present.”

Rating 3 comment:

- “The feedback may have influenced the steering committee but input was not specific.”

#### Sponsor’s Response

Rating: 1

“With an increased focus on service and support in terms of resources, it is critical to ensure clients’ needs are defined, understood and met.”

k)	Use of Models of KEY ACTIVITIES	1	6
	(Bubble Diagrams) to discuss WHY we	2	10
	should carry out the activity, HOW,	3	2
	and RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	4	0

The participant response here was a marked difference from my perception of models being one of the most critical factors in achieved changes in Weltanschauungen. The sponsor had also regarded models as critical. However only 33% of participants shared this view.

There was an indication that the use of generic models caused some problems, i.e. lack of fit to some resource areas, although this could have been because the respondents were expecting the models to reflect the current situation.

*From my perspective there was also unexpected value placed on the ways in which the models contributed, as I had not considered models in this way, eg identify procedures, develop structures, clarify roles and structures. This indicated that the models had been found useful in the organisational structure work in which I had not been involved.*

Rating 1 comments:

- “So as to clearly define all aspects of the activity and How and Resource implications.”
- “This no doubt contributed greatly to clear thinking, particularly in developing structures.”
- “Clear picture, assisted to understand what we should be doing and clarify roles and structures.”

Rating 2 comments:

- “A good way to identify procedures.”
- “Sometimes they didn’t fit, therefore confusing the issues.”
- “Very helpful - did not necessarily fit all resource areas.”
- “Sometimes confusing.”
- “Useful to show graphically”.

#### Sponsor’s Response

Rating: 1

“Very easy to understand and conceptualise.

Allows presentation of ideas and concepts very simply and efficiently, and avoids long narrative paragraphs of prose.

Assists vision development - a picture paints a thousand words.

Establishes context and forces assessment/analysis of why events/activities are undertaken.

Ensures those activities undertaken are priorities.

Always gets back to why.”

1)	Learning more about other CORPORATE SERVICES BRANCHES during the Review	1	7
		2	9
		3	3
		4	0

*This relatively low number of respondents regarding this factor as critically important may indicate that the participants had not yet realised the value of this in their new roles, as I believe that workshop discussion indicated that an enhanced understanding of the activities of all Corporate Services branches had occurred.*

Rating 1 comments:

- “A great opportunity to learn how to coordinate services better and to appreciate other areas.”
- “Great overall view to allow a more proactive approach.”
- “Excellent so we all don’t get caught up in our own little world.”

Rating 2 comments:

- “Why reinvent the wheel - see what works elsewhere”
- “Most aspects already known.”

Rating 3 comment:

- “For me this was not as critical. However for others I feel this would rate higher.”
- “Most of the work we did really only related to our own areas.”

#### Sponsor’s Response

Rating: 1

“Enhances team concept. Develops greater understanding and awareness of each areas initiatives, problems, issues, etc.”

m)	Working with colleagues within the Branch to develop the new ORGANISATION STRUCTURE	1	15
		2	3
		3	1
		4	0

With an 83% critical response Neil Hunter (and his HR staff) had clearly been successful in coordinating this activity, and the participative approach had obviously been appreciated. The participants may have also been aware that some other State government organisations develop new organisation structures behind closed doors, and this causes a great deal of anxiety amongst those whose jobs will be affected.

Rating 1 comments:

- “Very important in terms of acceptance and creating ‘team spirit’.”
- “Only way of having complete or best possible acceptance.”
- “This was all part of the participation process. It no doubt greatly assisted in the outcome.”

- “Help to establish branch and corporate level issues.”
- “Well accepted by participants from non managerial level.”

Rating 2 comment:

- “At least this provides some ownership of outcomes and directions”

Rating 3 comment:

- “The structure came as a result of the identified role.”

#### Sponsor’s Response

Rating: 1

“Fosters team work and ownership.”

- n) OTHER. (Please add and rate any further factors you believe should be included in the above list)

Comments were:

“Increased awareness by senior management of what work is carried out in the Branch”

1 1

“Having very disparate Branches participating together. This may well have been essential but did I feel it bogged the process down.”

4 1

#### Sponsor’s Response

Rating: 1

Maintenance of momentum. (Keeping every one up!)

#### ANY OTHER COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE ABOUT THE REVIEW?

There were two positive comments from the participants:

“I think it is essential to the long term survival of Corporate Services.”

“I feel that the overall process was excellent and well handled Liz - congratulations. To me the most difficult part to resolve was the mapping of organisational structure to functions. One suggestion I might make is that before leaving each Branch/area to try to work this out that some concepts or models/examples may be given to stimulate people’s thinking and to provide information on concepts such as team structures, etc.”

(This suggestion was appreciated for future projects. Although I was not involved in this phase, there were some ideas I could have contributed based on my work in other organisations to develop organisational structure.)

In contrast to the above positive comments, two negative comments were made.

*I believe these are isolated opinions, given the range of supportive comments throughout the other questionnaires. However these comments indicate that trust and credibility had not been achieved with these two participants. Again I was reminded of Jim Scholes belief (Appendix 4) that there will always be participants who cannot be "won over", and Jim suggested these people could represent 30% of participants. I believe we had achieved less than 30% disbelievers, but nevertheless the comments are significant if these people are key to the implementation of the review. The comments also reinforce the views of Jackson (1982) and Rosenhead (1984) that true participation and genuine agreement cannot be achieved because of imbalances in power and resources amongst participants.*

The negative comments were:

- "I believe it would have been better received generally had senior management not 'pretended' they had no preconceived ideas. (They'd be pretty hopeless managers if they didn't.) The ideas could just have usefully been put forward for discussion in an open way, thus avoiding some suspicion and mistrust among staff."
- "It seemed to me that the decision as to the new structure had been decided prior to the review, and the working party approach was just for show. This was illustrated easily in some areas when suggestions for changes in the new structure were ignored."

Finally, a comment was received, showing some reservations about implementation and the feasibility and desirability of the change:

- "Some of the goals will be expensive and difficult, if not impossible, to implement. The overall 'streamlining' could have been achieved by simple improvements in individual branches. Time will tell. The overall process, however, was positive and timely, if a little idealistic. I hope it works."

#### Sponsor's Response

"Stimulating and enjoyable. Not the destination only the first step on a long journey."

I believe this is important as it is a trap from an SSM perspective to believe that the project alone will achieve organisational change, rather than focussing also on the events which follow to implement the SSM study's outcomes.



In summary, the participants' ranking of "1" (critical) in priority order was:

Identification of issues	95%
Leadership and involvement of senior management	86%
Identification of SWOT	85%
Working with colleagues within the Branch on organisation structure	83%
Input from internal clients	79%
Explanation of the purpose and objectives of the review	75%
The role of the facilitator	75%
Input from external clients	69%
Use of workshops	68%
Enabling all corporate services staff to provide input to the workshops	66%
Discussion of preliminary vision	43%
Learning more about other Corporate Services branches	37%
Personal interviews with the facilitator	35%
Use of key activity models	33%

The only item on the questionnaire which had been rated as "4" ("Negative impact. This factor made it more difficult for us to develop a new Role.") related to the one person's answer to the use of workshops. As stated previously, the greatest surprise for me (and most significant discrepancy with my viewpoint) was the low rating of Key Activity Models. As an SSM practitioner I have believed in the power of these models to extent thinking, and this view is reinforced in the SSM literature and in the interviews with SSM facilitators which I conducted as part of this research. (See Appendix 4.)

I concluded that I had achieved a response to my research themes. There was an agreed shift in Weltanschauungen, which encompassed not only "what" was to be done, but "how". There was cohesion in a broad understanding of the new Weltanschauung between facilitator, sponsor and a majority of participants. It had been possible to identify which factors in the process contributed most to the change in Weltanschauungen, but the participants' view of this

was different to the facilitator's. This highlighted the value of the research design including both qualitative (case study) and quantitative (survey) approaches. Rather than the survey verifying the qualitative analysis (Gable, 1994 p 114), it had reduced the risk of improper interpretation (Kerlinger, 1986, p 348).

## **CASE STUDY 2, LIBRARY SERVICES REVIEW:**

There were only four respondents for this questionnaire, the two senior librarians and two of their staff members who were the most consistent attendees at the workshops (given that in the early workshops the support staff librarians tended to change). Therefore the rating analysis of the responses is provided for information, but is clearly not statistically robust. In any case, most of the ratings were either "1" or "2".

### **Questions 1 & 2**

#### **Role of Library Services, before and after the Review**

##### **Facilitator's View**

The before role related to providing basic library services to specific clients, within resource constraints.

The after role was to be an integral part of an information resource team, providing strategic information and library services which contribute to the administration of justice in WA

##### **Participants' Views**

The participants did not perceive a major change in role, but rather that resources would be available to provide additional services to a wider client base, as shown in the following comments:

1.     Before:  
          “To provide legal information to CLD legal and para legal staff and the judiciary.”  
  
          After:  
          “The role is essentially unchanged. However there was useful clarification of the role (especially from clients) and resources needed to fulfil this role.”
2.     Before:  
          “Provision of library materials within available funding. Limited reference service on request.”  
  
          After:  
          “Provision of agreed library materials within a budget. Provision of library services as desired by users and within staffing limitation.”

3. Before:  
“Providing a specialised library service to Crown lawyers, judiciary, magistracy.”
- After:  
“Given that extra resources can be provided to more adequately meet the needs of the above, and then additional resources provided, to widen this role to include an information service to other Corporate Services sections, and the wider Department.”
4. Before:  
“To provide an efficient and cost effective library service to Judges, Magistrates and Crown lawyers to enable them to meet their objectives.”
- After:  
“As above. However, within sufficient resources should also provide library services to the executive, I.T. and H.R. areas.”

I was surprised at these responses and wondered if there had been no change in Weltanschauungen. However, the two comments added to Question 3, “Is this the correct role?” (to which all answered Yes), provide further insight:

“This belief does not stem from the review. It has always been taken as highly desirable - even very uncomfortable that we couldn’t fulfil this role.”

“On track to developing full library service requirements for the Courts of the State. In time these libraries should be developed and devolved to the bodies they serve (5 year time frame).”

*I concluded that, probably based on their professional training, the librarians had always believed their role was to provide a full range of information services, backed by an appropriate library collection. The problem was that they had never been able to promote and justify this role, and hence had not been resourced to carry it out.*

*I believe this was different to the Corporate Services review where, in those instances where the participants expressed that it was “how” the role would be implemented which had changed, the issue was not inadequate resources, but a new understanding of what had to be done.*

### Question 3

Do you believe the new Role is the correct Role for Library Services?

All answered yes. Comments are included above.

Question 4, Factors which most contributed to the development of the new Role

		Rating	No.
a)	PERSONAL INTERVIEWS with the FACILITATOR before the workshops began	1 2 3	1 1 2
	The "1" score had the comment:		
	"Complexity of Supreme Court history, management, etc needed to be 'aired' and reason for 'being' communicated."		
	The lower rankings were in response to this deliberately being more of a listening exercise on my part for Case Study 2.		
b)	The explanation of the PURPOSE and OBJECTIVES of the Review	1 2	2 2
	The only comment was: "Set the boundaries and gave focus."		
c)	Use of WORKSHOPS as the basis for participation and discussion	1 2	2 2
	The only comment was: "Provided opportunity to offer suggestions and solutions without (too much) dissent!"		
d)	The role of the FACILITATOR	1 2	3 1
	"Invaluable though she earned her respect and money!"		
e)	Leadership and involvement of SENIOR MANAGEMENT	1 2	3 1
	Two comments: "Thought they learned as much as they gave - captive audience, but appreciated the opportunity."  "Thank you!"		

- |    |  |   |   |
|----|--|---|---|
| f) | Enabling ALL LIBRARY STAFF to provide input to the workshops | 2 | 3 |
|----|--|---|---|

“Not all staff could give due to limited work experience.”

“I do not believe that all library staff were involved, only representatives.”

“Difficult to involve everyone and still retain continuity.”

*Clearly the participative approach with Working Party members acting as intermediaries had not really eventuated, in contrast to the wider use of this technique in Case Study 1.*

- |    |  |        |        |
|----|--|--------|--------|
| g) | Identification of ISSUES affecting the future Library Services | 1<br>2 | 2<br>2 |
|----|--|--------|--------|

“The need to confront the future and bury the past was critical.”

*Reference here, I believe, to the conflict which erupted during this debate, and to recognition that conflict can play a positive role, as highlighted in Appendix 4, consultant interviews.*

- |    |   |   |   |
|----|---|---|---|
| h) | Discussion of the ideal ETHOS from the Client and Library Staff perspective, ie | 2 | 4 |
|----|---|---|---|

Answers to:  
Library Service people are very .....?

“Interesting variation - management to library staff  
- CLD to Supreme Court, according to client rapport.”

- |    |  |   |   |
|----|--|---|---|
| i) | Identification of STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS (SWOT) | 2 | 4 |
|----|--|---|---|

“Benefit to vocalise admission of recognised problems and communicate break down ‘barriers’.”

- |    |  |   |   |
|----|--|---|---|
| j) | Input from CLIENTS via interviews and questionnaires | 1 | 3 |
|----|--|---|---|

“Proposal for Supreme Court put to Chairman, based on knowing client needs plus some consultation. Chairman put to Judges and Masters. Unanimous response, or willing to accept any solution to the old problems.”

	“Critical I overcame my misgivings that we would falsely raise their expectations.”		
	“These gave vital information on services required and the impact if such services were not provided. This helped to clarify role of CLD library.”		
k)	Use of Models of KEY ACTIVITIES (Bubble Diagrams) to discuss WHY we should carry out the activity, HOW, and RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	2	4
	“Simplified and involved all therefore decision arrived at more comfortably.”		
l)	Carrying out analysis of the CLIENT SURVEY to identify Common Service Requirements, Library Infrastructure, Team Responsibilities, Implications, Projects	1 2	3 1
	<i>[Note: This is a different question to item l in Case Study 1 which was: Learning more about other CORPORATE SERVICES BRANCHES during the Review]</i>		
	“Important for the librarians to identify common denominators. Raise professional profile with client group.”		
m)	Working with colleagues to develop the new ORGANISATION STRUCTURE	1 2	3 1
	“Colleagues committed to involvement and success of project.”		
	“This was immensely rewarding. I think we buried a lot of misconceptions.”		
n)	OTHER. (Please add and rate any further factors you believe should be included in the above list)		
	“The notion that we could be committed to excellence under the new structure.”	1	1

“Perceived ongoing support from I.T.,  
H.R. and other Corporate Services.”

1 1

“Recognition of the essential services  
provided by CLD libraries and of the  
staff requirements necessary to provide  
such services.”

“For the first time, the Library was  
seen by other Corporate Service areas as  
‘belonging’ in this type of forum, ie  
raised profile and raised credibility.

2 1

*I believe these comments sum up the essence of the Library Review, from the perspective of the librarians. They now felt understood, empowered, and part of a wider team, and as a result were more confident that the message of what they wanted to achieve had finally been heard.*

#### ANY OTHER COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE ABOUT THE REVIEW?

“The most beneficial aspect of this review was the opportunity to ascertain the  
information requirements of clients and design appropriate structures and services to  
meet them.”

“The opportunity to participate was much appreciated.”

*I concluded that a change in Weltanschauungen had not occurred in the way in which I had expected (and as framed in my research themes). Nonetheless, the SSM process had been successful in achieving improved shared understanding - between two groups of librarians, and between librarians and non librarians. The specific techniques within SSM which had been useful had been identified and, from Case Study 2, the response to the importance of specific techniques indicates that no one technique has particular importance, rather it was the entire process which contributed. I believe this is a more holistic view and indicates the interrelationship of aspects of a project.*

The analysis of the SSM learning which resulted from the case studies is discussed in Chapter 8. Synthesis of research findings is presented in Chapter 9.